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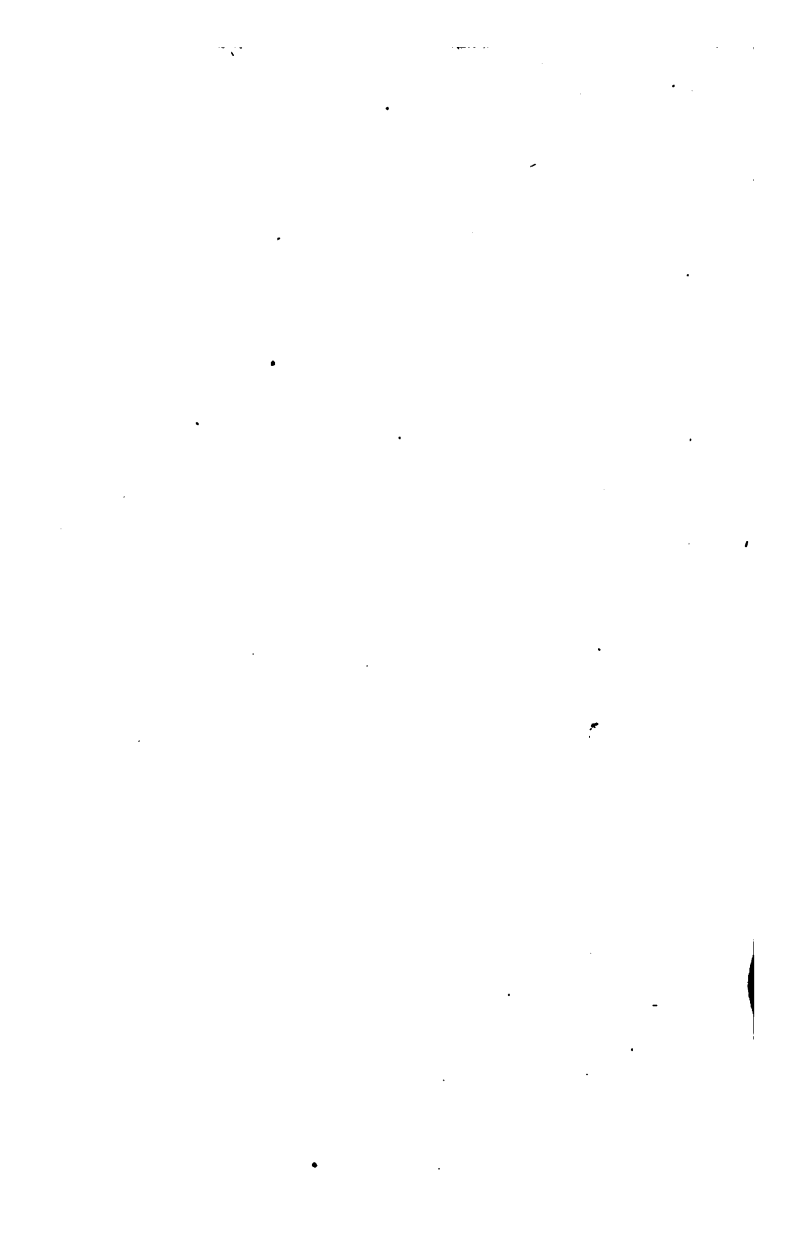
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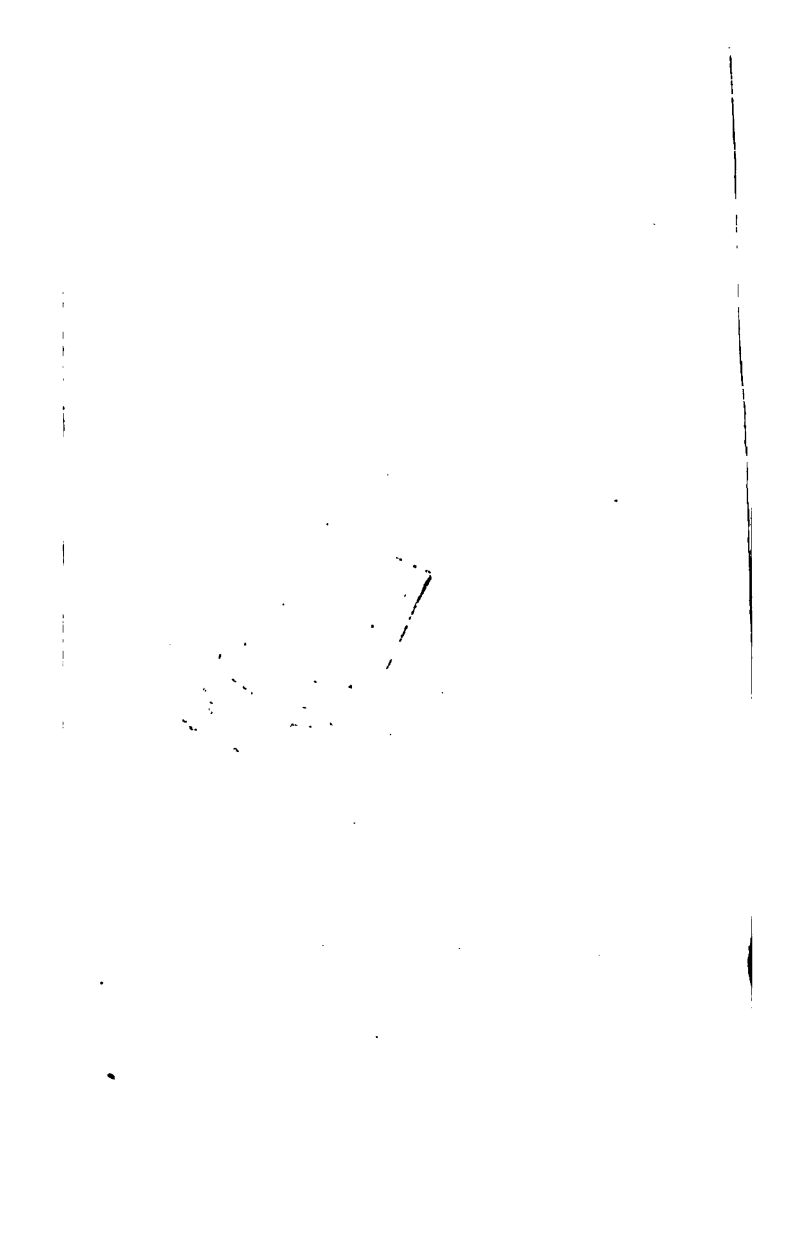
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**“You seem to be weary, my friend,” said Mr. Curtis, the vicar of Colme, stopping courteously to speak to a sailor, who was seated on the stump of a tree at the side of the pathway.**

**Christian’s Panoply.**

**p. 1.**

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# NED FRANKS;

OR,

## The Christian's Panoply.

BY

A. L. O. E.

AUTHORESS OF "SHEPHERD OF BETHLEHEM," "STORIES ON THE PARABLES," "CHRISTIAN CONQUESTS," "WAR AND PEACE," "CROWN OF SUCCESS," "LOST JEWEL," ETC.

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# CONTENTS.

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## I. THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH.

|                                 | PAGE |
|---------------------------------|------|
| 1. COMING HOME.....             | 1    |
| 2. SPEAKING OUT.....            | 11   |
| 3. THINKING IT OVER.....        | 16   |
| 4. PUT TO THE QUESTION.....     | 26   |
| 5. THE LAME SQUIRREL.....       | 33   |
| 6. A STORM.....                 | 43   |
| 7. THE FOOT-PRINT.....          | 48   |
| 8. THE SCHOOL-ROOM ADDRESS..... | 53   |
| 9. CLEARING UP.....             | 61   |

## II. THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUS- NESS.

|                                 |     |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| 1. SMALL LEAKS.....             | 65  |
| 2. THE LITTLE MAID.....         | 72  |
| 3. PROFESSION AND PRACTICE..... | 83  |
| 4. PUTTING ON ARMOR.....        | 92  |
| 5. PROVING THE ARMOR.....       | 100 |
| 6. HELP IN NEED.....            | 108 |
| 7. ANOTHER TRIUMPH.....         | 114 |
| 8. THE CANVAS BAG.....          | 121 |

## III. THE SANDALS OF PEACE.

|                            | PAGE |
|----------------------------|------|
| 1. DULL DAYS .....         | 128  |
| 2. FLAGS OF THE WORLD..... | 137  |
| 3. THE PET SQUIRREL .....  | 144  |
| 4. THE FLOATING BUOY.....  | 151  |
| 5. BRIARS AND THORNS ..... | 161  |
| 6. REBUKE .....            | 170  |
| 7. TONGUE AND TEMPER.....  | 178  |

## I.

# The Girdle of Truth.

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## I.

### COMING HOME.

"You seem to be weary, my friend," said Mr. Curtis, the vicar of Colme, stopping courteously to speak to a sailor, who was seated on a stump of a tree at the side of the pathway. It was a glowing day in August; the air was hot and sultry, and dust lay thick on the road.

Ned Franks, the sailor, rose on being addressed, and touched his glazed hat, on which appeared the badge of the anchor, surmounted by a crown, which showed that he had belonged to the Royal Navy. He was a fine stalwart-looking young man, scarcely thirty years of age, with sun-burnt cheek, and thick curling



hair ; and as Mr. Curtis met the glance of his clear blue eye, the clergyman thought that he had never looked upon a face more manly or pleasant.

"I've walked twenty miles, sir, since sunrise," said Franks, glancing at the bundle which he had been carrying on a stick across his shoulder, and which was now resting against the stump from which he had risen. "But I'm nigh port now, I take it, if yonder's the village of Colme."

"Are you going to visit it?" asked the vicar.

"I'm going to drop anchor there for good, sir," answered the tar ; "I've a sister—a step-sister I should say, living yonder ; she and I are all that are left of the family now, and I'll make my home with her, please God."

"Surely you are too young to give up the navy, my friend. Idleness would be no blessing to a fine strong lad such as you seem to be ; you may have many years before you yet of good service to the Queen."

"I shall never serve the Queen again, bless

her!" replied the young sailor, with a touch of sadness, and Mr. Curtis then, for the first time, remarked that the left sleeve of Ned's blue jacket hung empty; "but I don't look to be idle, sir," continued Franks, in a tone more cheerful. "Bessy will have my bit of a pension for the mess and the berth, and I'll see if I can't make myself useful in some way or other—go errands, or maybe try the teaching tack; anything would be better than lying like a log on the shore."

"Teaching?" repeated the clergyman; "what are you able to teach?"

"Not many things," replied the sailor, with a smile, "reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic, and not much of them neither; but I like a book when I can overhaul one, and I usually make good way with the youngers."

"I well believe that," said Mr. Curtis; "I doubt not that you've many a good sea-story to tell, and stirring adventure to relate. I see," he continued, "from the badge on your hat, that you've served in the 'Queen;' I dare say that you lost your arm by a Russian ball

from a Sebastopol battery," and the vicar looked with interest at the young seaman, picturing him at the post of duty amidst the smoke and din of a fight.

"No, sir," replied Ned, frankly; "I smashed my arm on shore, stumbling down an open cellar on a starless night."

Mr. Curtis slightly raised his eyebrows, and there was a little less interest in his manner as he inquired, "and who is the sister with whom you are to live?"

"Bessy Peele, sir; she's a widow in these parts."

"I know her," said Mr. Curtis, rather drily; she lives in the thatched cottage yonder, whose chimney you can just see over these trees. I hope that she may make you comfortable," he added.

"It's not much, sir, that I want," said the sailor; "a dry berth, a wholesome mess, and a welcome; he who gets that may be thankful, whether on sea or on shore."

"I shall call and see you," said the clergyman, kindly, "and have a little talk with you

on other matters than those which concern but this passing life."

"I shall be heartily glad, sir," replied Ned, again touching his glazed hat; "it's well to have some one to teach us how to steer 'twixt the rocks and the shoals."

"I hope that we have both the same port in view," said the clergyman.

"I hope so," answered Ned Franks, cheerfully; and as the vicar bade him good day, he turned in the direction of his new home.

Mrs. Peele's cottage stood a little retired from the dusty high-road, being divided from it by a bit of waste ground, on which some pigs were feeding. The ground was overgrown with nettles and straggling briars: the dwelling was of mud, with a roof of thatch, green with lichen and moss, under which, as under heavy overhanging brows, peeped two dots of windows like eyes. The door stood open, and within Ned caught sight of his sister engaged in washing.

Mrs. Peele was a tall bony woman, with an habitual stoop, clad in a rusty black dress,

with a cap which was rustier still. Broad lines of gray streaked her hair, and Ned's first feeling was that of painful surprise at the change which years had made. He did not stop, however, to dwell on the past. "Holloa; Bessy! don't you know me?" he exclaimed, as he quickened his pace, and the next minute Mrs. Peele had run out, with her bare arms covered with soap-suds, to welcome her younger brother.

She was followed by a lad about ten or eleven years of age; a sharp, wiry boy, whose pointed upturned nose, quick little black eyes, and restless manner, somehow suggested to the sailor's mind the idea of a weasel. Ned shook him heartily by the hand on hearing that this was his nephew Dan; and, with a heart glowing with pleasure at being once more in a home, the seaman entered the cottage accompanied by the Peeles.

"Now, Dan, you take your uncle, and show him his room while I wring these out, and get a bit of something ready for dinner," said Bessy. "I hardly looked for you so early,

Ned," she added, addressing herself to her brother.

"I was up with the lark," said the sailor.

Dan, looking up with curiosity in his keen small eyes towards the stranger, whom he scarcely yet ventured to call "uncle," led the way to the back of the cottage, where was a kind of garden—if a place could deserve that name where nothing but sickly cabbages seemed to grow, with a full crop of chickweed and groundsel between. A small wood-house adjoined the cottage, and over this was a little loft, to be reached by a rough sort of ladder.

"We're to go up the hatchway, are we?" said Ned, mounting the ladder with a lightness and rapidity which surprised his nephew. He had to stoop his curly head low as he passed through the entrance, the door of which appeared never to have been intended to fit, since even when shut it admitted as much light as the small one-paned window of greenish glass, with a thick knob in the middle. The loft was very small, with walls unpapered, and rafters uncovered; a dirty mattress lay on

the dirtier floor, and a musty scent pervaded the place.

"I can't say much for the berth," thought Ned; "it's not big enough to swing a cat in, and doesn't look as if the planks had ever been holystoned. I must set things a little ship-shape. Bessy, poor soul, has enough to keep her busy with her washing; I must try if I can't make my one hand do the business of two." The man-of-war's seaman, accustomed to spotless cleanliness and neatness, looked around on the miserable den with a mixture of disgust and good humor. "I'll rub up the bull's eye," he said, "and get that door to fasten with something better than a piece of old rope; and I'll try to knock up a bit of a shelf in that corner, for I've a few books in that bundle of mine. We'll soon have all tight and trim as a captain's cabin!"

Ned Franks was to find that other things in his new home required setting to rights as well as his loft, and that there are spots and stains harder to rub out than those on his walls and floor.

"Why don't you keep that garden in trimmer order?" asked the sailor, as he descended the ladder, followed by Dan. "You might grow enough of potatoes and cabbages in yon slip to supply your mother half the year."

"I've not a minute's time," answered Dan; "I look after Sir Lacy Barton's cows."

"Lacy Barton!" repeated Ned, "why that's the name of one of our middies."

"Sir Lacy has a son in the 'Queen' as I've heard."

"What are you saying about Sir Lacy?" asked Bessy Peele, catching the sound of the name, as her brother and Dan re-entered the kitchen.

"That he has a son aboard my old vessel the 'Queen.'"

"That's a piece of luck for us!" cried Bessy, pausing in her occupation of cutting rashers from a fine large piece of bacon: "he's our landlord, is Sir Lacy Barton, and he's thinking of pulling down our cottage to build the new school in its place, and I'm mighty anxious to be in his favor. 'Tis a



lucky chance that you've come, and can tell him all about his son."

"That depends on what I've to tell," answered Ned, with a smile; "in some cases it's 'least said soonest mended.' I hope that none of the family will come to question me about young Mr. Barton"—and the frank face of the sailor expressed more than his words, as he remembered the doings of the most worthless youth on board of the man-of-war.

"Well, if you was asked, you'd say something pleasant I hope," observed Bessy.

"I could not say what was false," answered Ned.

The words were simple enough, but the decided tone in which they were uttered, made Bessy exchange glances with her son. The boy shrugged his shoulders slightly, and something like a smile rose to the corners of his lips. The very straightforwardness of the sailor made him appear strange to those who had long mistaken cunning for wisdom, and low deceit for sharpness.

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## II.

## SPEAKING OUT.

THE table was spread with food, homely but abundant, steaming bacon and greens.

"A twenty miles' walk must have made you ready for your dinner, Ned," said Bessy, as she seated herself at the table, and a well-filled plate was soon before each of the party.

"Why, uncle, what are you waiting for?" asked Dan, surprised that the hungry sailor did not at once begin his meal.

"Bessy," said Ned, quietly, "do you say grace, or shall I?"

Again mother and son exchanged glances. As no answer was given, Ned, in few words, thanked God for His mercies through Christ. This was no mere form with the weather-beaten sailor, who found himself in haven at last, after the tempest and the fight, the hardships and perils of a sea life, and was thankful to God for mercies greater than preservation through all these.

"I'm afraid," said Ned, looking with a

good-humored smile at his plate, "that a maimed Jack-tar such as I am must signal for assistance even at the mess."

Bessy had for the moment forgotten her brother's condition; she had not realized the constant inconvenience which must follow the loss of an arm. Ned's misfortune did not, however, appear in the least to weigh down his spirits, and he chatted merrily through dinner-time, talking over old days, and then making inquiries as to what hope there might be of his getting such employment as might suit a one-armed man.

"I've heard as how Mr. Curtis, our vicar, is looking out for some one to help with his school," said Dan.

"I think that it must have been your parson who hailed me on my course here," observed Ned.

"He's rather an oldish man, bald, with a little limp in his walk," said Dan.

"That's he!" cried the sailor. "He talked to me friendly enough, and asked me how I had lost my arm."

"And what said you?" inquired Bessy.

"The truth, of course, that I was lubber enough to stumble down into a cellar at night."

"O, Ned, he would think that you were drunk," exclaimed Bessy.

"I'm afraid that he did," said Ned; "I could see in his face that I'd let myself down a peg in his good opinion."

"O, uncle, what a chance you lost!" cried Dan, his black eyes twinkling slyly under his shock of rough hair. "If I'd been you, I'd have told such a tale, how I lost that arm boarding a thundering big ship, or saving an officer's life, or doing some desperate deed! You'd have been a reg'lar hero in Colme; they'd have been getting up a subscription for you, and Mr. Curtis would have clapped you into the place of teacher at once! 'Twould have been the making of you, it would!"

"Dan," said Ned, laying down his fork, and looking steadily at his nephew across the table, "do you know what a lie is?"

The boy was taken aback by the sudden

question, and his eyes sunk under the gaze that was fixed upon him. Receiving no answer, the sailor went on,—“A lie is a mean thing—a senseless, a wicked: an habitual liar is a sneak, a coward, and a fool!”

“A fool! I don’t see how you can make *that* out,” muttered Dan, who was secretly not a little proud of his cunning, and who thought the name of fool a great deal worse than that of knave.

“It’s easy enough to make out,” said Ned; “a liar is a fool as regards this life; for, look ye, he’s sure to be found out afore long, and a good character is worth more than anything that he could get in exchange for it. Is it nothing to be trusted, is it nothing to be able to look any man in the face?” Dan was at the moment uneasily peering down at the crumbs on the floor. “Would a man not be called a fool who should put to sea in a vessel whose timbers were all rotten, however gaily painted she might be, or however fine a figure-head she might carry? She must be stove in when the first storm came, she must soon show that

she was not seaworthy." Ned had spoken with the fiery energy of one who, as he often owned, carried "too much gunpowder in his cargo;" but his tone softened to quiet earnestness as he went on. "And if we come to speak of another world, my lad, what shall we say of the folly of lying, whatever the temptation to do so may be? Was it without reason, think you, that St. Paul, when telling how a Christian man should be armed to fight against the devil, bade him first be *girt about with truth*.\* Why, we couldn't so much as set a foot in the golden city without it; you've heard what's said in God's Word of that matter; outside, shut out of glory, in company with murderers and idolaters will be *whosoever loveth and maketh a lie*!† The devil himself is the father of lies,‡ such as make them, follow him; and they who choose their portion with him are fools, whatever the world may give, or whatever the world may call them!"

There was silence in the cottage for several

\* Eph. vi. 15.

† Rev. xxii. 15.

‡ Jo. viii. 44.

minutes after Ned had ceased speaking. Dan attempted no reply, but finished his dinner in somewhat sulky reserve; then appearing suddenly to remember that he had to look after the cows, the boy rose and slunk out of the place. Dan did not, however, go in the direction of the fields, but into the village to play at pitch-and-toss with Tom and Jack Mullins, and to tell them wonderful stories of his sailor uncle, who was, he said, a first-rate fellow for fighting, and polished off Russians as fast as they might knock down ninepins, but who had a ticklish temper to deal with, flaring up like fire at a word.

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### III.

#### THINKING IT OVER.

"You took Dan up sharp, brother," said Bessie, as her son quitted the cottage.

"Maybe I did," answered Ned, frankly.  
"I'm trying to keep down that hot temper of

mine, but there's nothing stirs it up like anything of deceit, and it gets in a blaze afore I'm aware. There was something in the lad's looks more than his words, that made me fancy him one of those who don't see clearly the difference atween truth and falsehood, and who get amongst the shoals almost without knowing it. I wanted to show him the beacon lights set in the Bible to warn us off them, that's all."

"Ah! Dan's quick enough at lying," said Bessy, with a sigh: "I can't believe a word that he says. Many and many's the time I tells him, 'Dan, with all those fine stories of yours, you'll get into trouble at last.'"

"And don't you tell him," said Ned, "that God hears, and marks down, and *that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the Day of Judgment?*"\*

"O, I'm not one of your saints that likes religion brought in at every turn," said Bessy, peevishly: "'tis all well enough to go decently to church on Sundays, and dear me!"

\* Matt. xii. 36.



she exclaimed, suddenly interrupting herself, and starting up from her seat, "if that is not Mrs. Curtis coming over the green! That woman is always taking one unawares;" and, with a quickness which astonished the sailor, Bessy whisked off the dish from the table, flung an old shawl over the large piece of bacon from which the rashers had been cut, and stowed away a heap of damp linen which she had been washing into a cupboard.

"She's in a mighty hurry to tidy the room for the lady," thought Ned, "but it doesn't look a bit neater than before."

Just as Bessy had finished her hasty preparations, Mrs. Curtis, a small, delicate lady, very simply but neatly dressed, tapped at the door of the cottage, and entered. Bessy was all smiles and curtsies; she dusted a chair and placed it for her guest, hoped that she had not been troubled by the heat of the day, and asked after "the young masters and misses," like one who took an affectionate interest in the well-being of the family.

"I am glad to see your brother here," said

Mrs. Curtis, courteously bending her head as the sailor respectfully rose at her entrance.

"Ah! yes, poor fellow!" exclaimed Bessy, "he's my only brother living, and as long as I have a crust, he shall be welcome to share it. We must all care for one another, ma'am, as our good minister told us last Sunday in his beautiful sermon."

"It would be but fair," thought Ned, "if Bessy gave the lady a notion that I pay for this *half-crust* with the whole of my pension."

"It's but a poor home that my brother has come to," continued Bessy, whose voice, in addressing the clergyman's wife, had a plaintive drawling tone, quite unlike that in which she usually spoke; "I have been wanting much, ma'am, to speak a word or two to you or to Mr. Curtis."

"My husband told me that he intended to call here soon," said the lady.

"Ah! how glad I am even to see his blessed face. Ah! what I owe him," cried Bessy, heaving a long sigh, as if to express by it gratitude too deep for words. "But what I

was a-going to say, ma'am, was, that I hopes as how Mr. Curtis will be good enough to put me again on the widows' list for the loaves. I've really such a hard pull to live, I don't know how we can get on without it;" and there was another long-drawn sigh.

"Ha!" thought the indignant sailor, "the gratitude was for favors to come."

"I don't see how my husband can put you on the needy widows' list," said the clergyman's quiet little wife; "your daughter is in service, your son gets work, you take in washing ——"

"Please, ma'am, begging pardon for interrupting you," said Bessy, again dropping a curtsey, "the trifle Dan earns would not keep him in bread (and it's little but bread as ever we tastes), and I've not had all this blessed week more than tenpence worth of washing, and"—here Bessy Peele's eyes chanced to meet those of her brother, flashing on her a glance of such fiery indignation, that, quite confused, she stopped short, stammered, and could not finish what she was saying. Mrs.

Curtis naturally turned to see the cause of the cottager's evident embarrassment, and was much struck by the stern countenance of the young man, who stood tightly pressing his lips together, as if to keep in some indignant burst. Finding that he had attracted notice, Ned, who had no wish to expose his sister, and who had difficulty in commanding himself, thought it safest to quit the cottage without uttering a word.

"Is anything the matter with your brother?" asked the lady, after Ned's abrupt departure.

"He has an odd temper, ma'am, very odd; I know that we shall have a good deal to put up with, but, as our good minister told us last Sunday"—and the woman went on with a string of what were meant as pious phrases, but which, being only lip-deep, made far less impression on her visitor than the speaker wished and intended.

"*She* talk to her son about truth!" exclaimed the indignant Ned Franks, as he strode into the back-garden, forgetful, in the

storm of his spirit, of the twenty miles which he had walked in the morning. "An acted lie is as bad as a spoken one, and her way of going on was all one wretched piece of acting from beginning to end. If there's one thing I scorn, despise, and detest more than another, it's hypocrisy like that!" Ned struck the nailed heel of his boot violently against one of the weeds, and uprooted it from the ground; perhaps he connected the worthless plant in his mind with the more hateful weed of deceit, or he wanted something on which to vent the angry feelings within him. "All weeds!" he muttered to himself. "I've a great mind to hoist sail at once and sheer off, and find some other home, where all will be open and above board, at least where there will be no hoisting of false colors, or hanging out of false lights, saying one thing and thinking another."

Ned took one or two rapid turns up and down the garden; then gradually slackened his pace as his anger began to cool down. "Who am I that I should judge another?" thought the frank-hearted seaman; "are we

not all of an evil nature, our souls as full of wickedness as this wretched garden of weeds? There's nothing good grows of itself, it's all God's grace as plants it. Am I—willful wayward sinner as I have been—am I to throw my own sister overboard, because she has not yet been led to see things as I see them, and to know that the straight course is the shortest course, and the only course that can land us in a safe haven at last? Maybe, with prayer and pains, we'll get the better both of her weeds and mine; I master my impatience and bad temper, she, and that lad of hers, learn that *a lying tongue is an abomination unto the Lord*,"\* and that all who serve a God of Truth must speak the truth from the heart."

Ned took another turn up and down, stooping down now and then to pull up and throw away some straggling weed, till he found his spirit calm enough for prayer. The sailor looked up at the sky, so blue, and clear, and transparent above him, and his heart rose in what was earnest supplication, though he could

\* Proverbs vi. 17.

not have put it into a regular form of prayer. He wished that his deeds, and his sayings, and those of his family, might be pure, and clear, and open as heaven's sunlight; that they might *be* in the sight of God what they wanted to *appear* in the sight of men, and be honest and true in all things, like faithful servants of the Lord.

Ned's meditations were broken in upon by Bessy Peele, who came running up towards him, with a bustling, excited air.

"What's in the wind?" cried Ned.

"You must come in directly," answered Bessy; "who do you think is in my kitchen—I knew she'd be here—but I'm sure—for Lady Barton herself to walk all the way from the Hall!"

"What has she come for?" asked Ned, knitting his brow from an uneasy apprehension of what was likely to follow.

"To hear about her son, to be sure! Lady Barton thinks no end of her son—a pretty scapegrace though he be! When he left her

she lay crying in her bed for a week,—there was never a mother so fond—or so blind !”

“But what can I say?” exclaimed Ned ; “I can tell nothing good of the lad !”

“You must invent something good then !” cried Bessy, in an irritated tone. “I can’t have you, with your stupid bluntness, setting my landlord’s wife against me, and getting my home pulled down over my head at Michaelmas, and my boy turned off, and my washing taken away !”

“I’d better not see Lady Barton,” said Ned.

“Shall I hurry back and say I couldn’t find you ? You could get over yon hedge and be off, without coming in front of the cottage.”

“No—no sneaking,” said the sailor, quickly : “I’ll face out the matter at once !”

“And you’ll say the best you can !” cried Bessy, changing her tone and tactics with a perception that her best chance with Ned lay in working upon his affection ; “you wouldn’t injure your poor widowed sister, as looks to you for comfort and kindness ?”



"I'll do no harm—if I can help it!" muttered the tar, feeling far more uneasy as he followed his sister than he would have done had he been led up to an enemy's battery.

---

#### IV.

##### PUT TO THE QUESTION.

LADY BARTON sat in the old wooden arm-chair, which formed the chief article of furniture in Mrs. Peele's kitchen, the flounces of her rich blue silk dress filling up the space between the red brick fireplace and the deal table, which was still scattered over with the crumbs of the recent repast. Lady Barton was a stately and elegant woman, with an air of fashion and dignity, which contrasted with the simple attire and manner of Mrs. Curtis, with whom she was conversing before Ned and Bessy re-entered the cottage. As they came in, Lady Barton was just returning into her

pocket a purse, from which she had taken a half sovereign, with what intent both the sailor and Bessy could not but guess as they caught sight of the glittering beads of the purse as it was replaced within the silk dress.

"Ah!" exclaimed Lady Barton, with a queenly graciousness of manner to the sailor, "I am glad to have an opportunity of speaking with one of the gallant men who have served in the same ship with my son. You can give me late accounts of Mr. Lacy Barton." With a bright smile on her lips, the lady awaited Ned's reply.

"I was aboard the same vessel as Mr. Barton for more than a year," said the tar, with the respectful manner with which he would have spoken to any lady.

"You must have seen much of him then?"

Ned only bowed, thinking to himself "a good deal too much." As he did not seem inclined to be communicative, the partial mother tried to draw him out by an observation: "My son usually makes himself a great favorite wherever he goes."

Bessy nudged her brother's arm, but Ned did not speak at the hint.

Lady Barton's gloved hand closed more tightly over the little piece of gold which it hid; rather less graciously she inquired whether Mr. Barton had been quite well when the sailor had seen him last.

Ned paused for a moment before he replied. "There was nothing much the matter with his health."

The tender mother took alarm from his hesitation as well as his words. "Not much the matter?" she anxiously repeated. "Was Mr. Barton not well, was he obliged to keep his cabin?"

"Only for a few days, lady," said Ned, sincerely desirous to relieve her.

"What ailed him?" asked Lady Barton, "was he laid up with fever?" Her voice betrayed her emotion.

"No, not fever," answered the sailor, wishing himself up to his neck in water rather than standing there to answer the lady's questions.

"It was not his chest—not his lungs?" said the anxious mother, dropping her voice; "he was so subject to coughs as a boy!"

"His lungs are as sound as can be, I'll answer for that!" replied Ned, with a clear recollection of the strength of a voice which, raised in an oath or a curse, might be heard above the roar of a storm.

"Then what *was* the matter with him?" repeated Lady Barton, in the tone of one who must, and will, have a reply. Ned's honest face was suffused with a flush as if he himself had been the culprit as he answered—"he'd had a bit of a spree on shore, and been knocked about a little; these things will sometimes happen, but a few bruises don't do much harm."

Lady Barton asked no more questions; she knew enough of her son's former habits to enable her to guess but too well what the sailor had left unsaid. Sorrow taking the form of mortified pride, the lady drew herself up, and the delicate kid-gloved hand slid something back into her pocket, a movement which did

not escape the covetous eyes of Bessy. Without condescending to say another word to Ned Franks, Lady Barton rose from her seat, and, turning to address Mrs. Curtis, plunged at once into a different subject of conversation. She asked the vicar's wife about her scholars, said that Sir Lacy had resolved on beginning to build the new school at Michaelmas, and observed that somewhere about this spot would be the best possible place for the site.

Bessy clenched her teeth, and scowled at her brother, but the expression of anger on her face was instantly changed to one of obsequious mildness, as she caught the eye of the stately Lady Barton. If Bessy had been gratified by the visit of the vicar's wife, she was overwhelmed by the honor of one from a titled lady, and with a double number of courtesies and thanks, she showed her two guests to the door, sending blessings after them as long as they remained within hearing.

And then!—

“You heartless good-for-nothing, unfeeling, ill-mannered dolt!” she exclaimed, turning

towards her brother with a gesture of her clenched fist, as though she could have found it in her heart to have struck him, had she dared; "what ill-luck brought you here to bring trouble, and ill-will, and ruin, on a poor lone widow as never did you any harm!"

"I'm as vexed as you can be, Bessy," said the sailor, passing his hand through his thick curly hair.

"You'd better have bit off that foolish tongue of yours, than have let it provoke such a lady!"

"It was grieving the mother, that I felt," said Ned Franks, "it was seeing her so anxious and troubled. 'Twas a stiff gale to weather, and I was never in my life more nigh dragging my anchor. But I'm glad," he added to himself, "I'm glad that I held fast by the truth."

Ned was to have little peace during the remainder of that day. He had to endure the "continual dropping" that made him bitterly remember Solomon's proverb—*It is better to dwell in a corner of the house-top, than with a*

*brawling woman in a wide house.\** On Dan's return home in the evening, the storm which Ned had lulled a little, broke forth anew with fresh fury.

"What do you think, Dan, that this here uncle of yours has been a-doing!" exclaimed Bessy to her son, banging down the kettle on the bar of the grate, as if it too had grievously wronged her. "Lady Barton herself, in her grand sweeping gown, came down from the Hall; I'd never but once afore seen her enter my cottage, and that was when your poor father lay a-dying!"

"What could she come for?" asked Dan, curiosity gleaming in his keen little eyes.

"What for but to hear about her son, to be sure, and to talk to this bear's cub about him, and to tip him with what would have bought me a Sunday gown, I'll be bound, for I saw the lady thrusting back her purse into her pocket: and there was he,"—Bessy pointed at Ned with her thumb,—“first standing dumb as a stock-fish, looking as if he couldn't utter

\* Proverbsxxi. 9.

a word, and then bounce out with such a fine tale, how Mr. Lacy had got himself smashed in a drunken row, how he had to lie in his bed for days all covered with bruises, how he was the most swaggering, quarrelsome ——”

Ned felt the hot blood mounting to his face, and the fiery passion to his heart: there was nothing for it but to beat a retreat, before he should utter as an angry man what as a Christian he might have regretted. Weary as the sailor was, there was something which he felt to be worse than fatigue, and he walked out into the cool fresh evening air, once more to quiet his fevered spirit under the light of the pale young moon.

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## V.

## THE LAME SQUIRREL.

REFRESHED by a good night's rest, notwithstanding the discomforts of his new abode, Ned Franks rose on the following morning



with a cheerful, thankful heart. He awoke with the verse on his lips,—

“I bless the Lord who safe hath kept,  
Who did protect me while I slept.  
Lord! grant when I from death awake,  
I may of endless life partake!”

Up sprang Ned from his rough bed, ready to forget and to forgive the “breeze” of the preceding day, and to set about his work in the spirit of the command, *whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might*. After his morning prayer, and Bible reading, Ned begun in earnest to set things “ship-shape” in what he called his “little cabin.” The loss of his left hand greatly increased the difficulty of laboring, but Ned Franks worked with a will, and therefore with good success. His only interruptions were from the little attentions required by a poor lame squirrel that the sailor had picked up on the previous evening, and which he nursed with the tenderness which seems peculiar to seamen. Ned carried it down with him when he went to breakfast in the kitchen, where he found his sister scarcely yet

recovered from her fit of displeasure; but her sulkiness could not stand against the influence of his sunny good-humor.

"Come, Bessy, lass," cried the sailor, "let bygones be bygones, we'll have smooth water to-day. After I've set my cabin to rights, I'll see what's to be done in your garden; if we could only get the ground clear of weeds, it's a fine crop we might look for next year."

Bessy Peele grew so gracious that she not only filled her brother's wooden bowl almost to overflowing with hot bread and milk, but she examined his squirrel with interest, prescribed for its wounded leg, and filled an old basket with hay to make a bed for the sailor's new pet. The poor little creature seemed already to know its master—did not flinch from his hand, and let him warm it within his rough jacket. "One could never harm a creature that trusted one," said Ned. "I'll nurse the squirrel till its leg is all right, and then give it its freedom again. 'Twould be hard to keep it in limbo, when it might enjoy itself in the woods."

Back went Ned Franks to his work ; nor did he stop till he had wrought a wondrous change in the appearance of his dull little loft, by the help of a pail of whitewash which he had procured from the village.

"It's beginning to look all taut and trim," said the light-hearted tar, stepping back with the big whitened brush in his hand, to survey and admire his work. "When I've earned a little more ready rhino, I'll have a bit of bunting of the Union-Jack pattern over my bed, and stick a few pictures round the wall, to make the cabin quite smart. And I'll have my books up there aloft." In default of a shelf, Ned had carefully ranged along the floor what he deemed his best earthly treasures, his Bible, and such works as the "Pilgrim's Progress" and "Saint's Rest," with a few other little books of a useful kind, from which the sailor had gleaned more knowledge than is usually possessed by one in his station of life.

Ned had made such good use of his time, that before dinner he had an hour to spare for

the garden. Bessy Peele, as she ironed out her linens, could hear Ned's manly voice behind the cottage singing blithely as a bird such sea-songs as "Poor Jack" and "The Arethusa." Ned Franks felt perfectly happy at his work; its very nature cheered him, for every weed that he pulled up seemed to his mind like an emblem of some evil habit rooted out. "God is ready to give us His sunshine and his dew," thought the sailor, "but He will have us to labor all the while; and though ours be but one-handed work as it were, He'll never refuse his blessing if He knows that we're doing our best. I did ill yesterday to be so angry with Bessy and her boy, because of their sly sneaking ways, just as I looked with scorn on the dirty loft and the weedy garden. 'One fault-mender is worth fifty fault-finders,' says the proverb. Maybe the great Pilot has guided me hither that I may take Dan Peele in tow, and get him out of the shoals of deceit, and show him that it's better to sail with the wind of truth

right in our canvas, than to lose way by tacking about, and split on the rocks at last."

Dan, on coming home to the cottage for dinner, found the sailor sitting by the table, with the crippled squirrel on his knee.

"Ah! I say, where did you get that?" asked the boy.

"In the woods, yester evening," answered Ned.

"In the woods—what woods?" inquired Bessy, turning round from the fire-place, where she was stirring something in the saucepan.

"Those woods yonder, at t'other side of the road," said the sailor.

"Why, that's Sir Lacy's park!" exclaimed Dan; "didn't you see the board up about trespassers being prosecuted?"

"I noticed no board," answered Franks; "it was getting dark, and I minded nothing but the squirrel. As I was cruising about on the road, I saw the little creature limping on the footway. Thinks I, 'the village boys will hunt it to death, or 'twill fall a prey to the weasels, so I'll catch it to save its life.'

Easier said than done; lame as it was, the little squirrel nearly managed to get off, squeezing itself through a hole in the fence, and so getting into the wood, or park as you call it. But I was over, and after it in a minute."

"I don't know how you managed to get over, maimed as you are," observed Bessy.

Ned Franks burst into a merry laugh. "A Jack-tar who is used to go aloft when 'tis blowing great guns, is not likely to make much of a bit of oak-fence," said he. "It was easy enough to climb over, but it was not easy to catch the squirrel; he led me a good long dance before I could clap my hand upon him."

"Then he did say right," exclaimed Dan, thumping his fist on the table.

"He! What do you mean?" cried the sailor, looking at the boy with surprise.

"The gamekeeper did say right when he declared that he caught a glimpse of a sailor in the wood."

"Likely enough," said Ned Franks. "I hope that no one thinks that I was poaching."

"Something worse may be thought," cried Dan, winking mysteriously, like one in the possession of an important secret. "Maybe you don't know what all the village is talking of, that just after dark, half the panes in Lady Barton's hqthouse were smashed, a lot of them colored panes too, and that the constable's on the look out to catch whoever has done the mischief."

"I've heard nothing about it," said Ned Franks, as he stroked quietly the reddish brown coat of his little squirrel.

"But you're like to hear a great deal about it, a great deal more than you'd like to hear," cried Dan. "'Tis said all about that you've some bitter ill-will 'gainst the young master aboard the 'Queen,' and all his family too, and that you was angry at something that the lady said or did yesterday, and the game-keeper saw you in the wood—and, of course, you was there for no good—and there's not a soul as doubts as you went there and smashed the glass out of spite."

"Some one has got up a fine story about

me," said Ned, who more than suspected that the whole was his nephew's invention.

Bessy Peele looked alarmed. "I hope—I hope," she exclaimed, "that we're not agoing to get into another scrape with Lady Barton! Sir Lacy is a hard man, and never lets any one off; 'twould be a dreadful business, Ned, if you was to be sent to prison!"

Franks flushed indignantly, as if the very thought were an insult; but he only said, "there's little danger of that, Bessy; I never hove in sight of the house."

"How unlucky it was that you were in the park at all," began Dan, but his mother cut him short.

"What's the use, you simpleton, of saying a word about the park? Who need know that your uncle was there at all?"

"But the gamekeeper ——"

"What of him?" interrupted Mrs. Peele; "he only guessed that he saw something like a sailor in the dusk, and even had he seen Ned as plainly as I do now, he's only one, and there's us three, you, I, and your uncle, as can



say—and hold by it too, that he never stirred from that there chimney-corner from sunset to midnight !”

“Bessy !” exclaimed her brother, sternly.

“You don’t mean to say,” cried Bessy, “that with your ridiculous notions about truth you’ll run into a trap with your eyes wide open, and get yourself disgraced, and locked up in jail ! What’s the use, I should like to know, of your telling the world that you were in the woods hunting a lame squirrel like a boy !”

“I shall say nothing about the matter,” answered Ned, “unless ——”

“Hist, hist !” exclaimed Dan, starting up, “if there ben’t Sir Lacy himself, and the vicar, the constable, gamekeeper, and all ! and they’re coming here !” he added, in alarm.

“O, Ned, Ned !” exclaimed Bessy, “whatever you do, don’t own that you ever got in them woods.”

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## VI.

## A STORM.

NED rose from his seat on the entrance of the two gentlemen; the constable and game-keeper remained at the door. Conscious of innocence, the sailor confronted the knight with a quiet composure which astonished his sister and Dan. Sir Lacy was a short, thickly-built man, with bushy white whiskers, and white hair, round a face whose usually pink hue was now flushed to a deeper tint. His round, gray, prominent eyes, with their expression of proud domineering insolence, disagreeably reminded Ned Franks of those of the knight's namesake and son.

"Your name is Ned Franks," said Sir Lacy at once, without deigning to take any notice of Mrs. Peele and her low curtsies.

"At your service, sir," answered Ned.

"You were trespassing in my park last evening?"

"No, indeed, he never left this cottage,"

began Bessy, but her brother silenced her by a glance.

"I am sorry that I trespassed, sir," he said, respectfully. "I did not see the board, and I was after this little creature;" he drew out the squirrel which, frightened by the entrance of strangers, had taken refuge within his blue jacket.

"You were after something else," said Sir Lacy, roughly; "do you mean to say that you did not willfully smash some twenty panes in my conservatory last evening?"

Ned looked steadily into the face of the rude questioner as he replied, "I was never in sight of your conservatory, sir; and as for smashing your windows, I know no more who did the mischief than Mr. Curtis himself;" and as if to appeal to his sense of justice, Ned Franks turned towards the clergyman.

"Perhaps you'll say that you know nothing about this," cried Sir Lacy, holding out a large leaden ball on which was roughly scratched the word "Sebastopol."

Ned Franks looked surprised, and, for a

moment perplexed, and passed his hand through his hair, as was his wont when in any difficulty.

"Can you deny that it is yours?" asked the knight.

"It is mine," said the sailor, frankly; "'tis a ball which struck me when we lay off the Crimea; but which—being spent—did not wound me at all, and I kept it in remembrance of a preservation from death. I lost it yesterday, I cannot tell where."

"I can tell where," exclaimed Sir Lacy, in a tone that rang through the cottage, and reached the group of village boys, whom curiosity had led to follow at a little distance the steps of the knight and the constable. "I can tell where you lost it! It was picked up in my conservatory this morning, having escaped notice last night when a dozen stones were found, which, like it, had been used in breaking my glass!"

Ned Franks with an effort kept down his temper, and replied calmly but firmly, "How the ball came there I know not; it was certainly never thrown by my hand."

"That's a falsehood!" cried the furious knight.

Then, indeed, the gunpowder blazed up in the breast of the young sailor; he struck his hand on the table, and, with flashing eyes, he exclaimed, "I never told a falsehood in my life, and you are the first man who ever spoke such a word of Ned Franks."

Mr. Curtis laid his hand on the arm of Sir Lacy, and whispered something to him in a low, earnest tone, while Bessy stood wringing her hands, and Ned remained with his form drawn up to more than its usual height, looking as a man might look who was facing desperate odds, but with unflinching resolution.

"Don't tell me!" exclaimed Sir Lacy, shaking off the hand of the clergyman; "he shall go to the lock-up at once, and answer for himself before the magistrate to-morrow! The fellow shall pay for my broken glass with a couple of months in jail! Here, Masson!" and at the call the constable entered, and Ned Franks was given to him in charge.

Surprise, indignation, anguish, struggled in

the breast of the seaman ; his first strong impulse was to knock the constable down ! But even in the sudden gust of passion Ned, whose leading principle was love and faith towards God, was like a ship that still obeys the helm, even when tossed on a raging sea.

“The God of Truth will make my truth clear one day !” Ned exclaimed, and with that appeal to One who could never be unjust, and who had Himself endured the anguish of reproach and false accusation, the sharpest pang of the seaman’s trial passed away. He remembered that he was drinking of his Master’s cup, and would submit to do so for the sake of that Master. With more composure than Ned but an hour before would have believed himself capable of showing under such circumstances—for disgrace to the seaman was worse than death—he gave a few needful directions to his sister, commended his lame squirrel to her care, and bade her and Dan good-bye.

“Cheer up,” were the sailor’s words, as he wrung Bessy’s hand at parting, “the blackest cloud will blow over, and we can’t be

driven from our moorings while the cable of truth holds fast."

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## VII.

### THE FOOTPRINT.

"I DON'T believe that he did it," said Mr. Curtis, thoughtfully, as he stood with his back to the mantelpiece in his own little study, with his hands behind him.

"I am convinced that he did not!" exclaimed Mrs. Curtis, from her seat by the table, where she was preparing some work for her girls' school.

"And on what do you found that conviction, my love?" asked the vicar.

"If the sailor had broken the windows, he would have said so at once," answered the lady. "That man could no more stoop to a falsehood than that pine"—she glanced out of the window—"could stoop to crawl on the

ground like bindweed ! Ned Franks has a soul above lying !”

“You speak very positively upon a very short acquaintance, my dear,” said the vicar with a smile, for he had seldom seen his gentle wife roused to give an opinion with such animation.

“What were you yourself just telling me, Henry? Did you not say that you were struck by the singular frankness with which the sailor owned that he had been trespassing in the park, and that the ball was his, and with the dignity of truth with which he asserted his innocence concerning the glass? And I also have seen him tried, and bearing the trial in a manner that would make me take the sailor’s word against that of a dozen other men. Was I not by when Lady Barton questioned Franks hard about her son? Did I not see the pain which her questions gave him? how he flushed and bit his lip, and yet from those lips an untruth could no more come than if they had been of marble! O, Henry, I am as sure of that young man’s innocence as I am of my own.”



"I'm afraid that we shall find it difficult to prove it, my dear."

"The way will be to find out who really did break the glass," said the lady. "I think it very likely that the mischief was done by one of the boys of our school."

"Nothing more probable," said the vicar; "but I see no way at present of discovering the real offender."

"I'll go to the park myself," exclaimed Mrs. Curtis, beginning hurriedly to put up her work. "I'll search all about the spot from which the stones must have been thrown, and see if I can pick up anything, if I can find a clue to the secret. And you, dear Henry," Mrs. Curtis laid her hand on the arm of her husband, "you have a Bible-class with the boys this evening, let your subject be *truth*. You have such a power to convince, to persuade, you may lead the culprit to confess."

"I fear that you hope too much, Eliza," said the vicar, shaking his head.

"I cannot hope too much," cried the lady,

"when my hope is in the mercy and justice of God, who can make all dark things light, and who will clear the guiltless. I'll go at once for my bonnet and shawl."

"The sun is very hot, still ——"

"O, never mind the heat," said Mrs. Curtis, as she hurried out of the room, first to pray for success, and then to take what other means she could to ensure it.

In about an hour the gentle little lady returned, looking heated and tired, but with an eager expression on her face as she re-entered the study, where her husband was busy at his desk.

"Have you found anything, Eliza?" he asked, glancing up from his writing.

"Very, very little, but something," she said, taking out of her bag a bit of whity-brown paper, roughly cut into shape.

"What may this be?" asked the vicar, taking it up in his fingers.

"It is the size, the exact size, as well as I could manage to make it out, of a footprint which I found on one spot where the ground

was a little less dry than in other places. It was just about a stone's throw from the conservatory of Sir Lacy."

"A single footprint!" exclaimed the vicar.

"And so faint that I passed the place thrice before I saw it at all," said the lady. "But two things at least were clear; there were nails in the boot which made the mark, as in those which our village boys wear, and the foot that wore it was a good deal smaller than that of a tall man like Ned Franks."

"There's something in that," observed the vicar, fixing his eyes thoughtfully on the paper. "But it by no means follows that the footprint was left by the person who broke the glass."

"Then you think the paper of no use," said the lady, in a tone of disappointment.

"I never said so; I trust that it may be of great use, my dear, and I thank you, not only for bringing it, but for the hint which you gave me in regard to my lecture this evening. I have been thinking over the subject."

"And praying, I am sure," said his wife.

“Ay,” replied the vicar of Colme; “we can do nothing without God’s blessing, and we can do everything if it be ours.”

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## VIII.

## THE SCHOOL-ROOM ADDRESS.

MR. CURTIS looked unusually thoughtful and grave as he walked up to the school-room. The boys missed the kindly smile and familiar nod, and the inquiries after sick relatives, which were wont to make his greeting resemble that of a father. All felt that the vicar had something on his mind, as he stood behind the reading-desk, with the sunset glow on his bald head, looking down on the throng of boys clustering in the closely-filled benches.

Instead of going on with the history of St. Paul, which he had been explaining in a course of lectures, the vicar turned to the fifth chapter of Acts. Before beginning to read, with his hand on the open Bible, Mr. Curtis said a few

words to the boys, who listened in the deep silence of expectation.

“You see me anxious and disturbed—I am so. You all know, I doubt not, what has happened in our village to-day. A sailor who, after serving his country through hardships and dangers, had come here but yesterday to enjoy rest and peace in a cottage-home, has been sent to the lock-up, accused of an offence, which I believe from my soul that he never committed.” Mr. Curtis paused, and the silence was so profound in the room, that the murmur of a little neighboring brook was distinctly heard. “My belief of his innocence,” continued the vicar, “is chiefly founded on his character for truth. I believe Franks to be incapable of the meanness and sin of telling a lie. But if the sailor be innocent, some one else must be guilty, and I have chosen the history of Annas and Sapphira for our reading this evening, that we may all learn from it how Almighty God sees, knows, and can bring to light these things that we believe to be hidden forever from the eyes of all men.”

Mr. Curtis then went on to read aloud the awful story recorded in the Word of God, of the man and woman whose characters had stood fair before the world, who had been counted amongst the flock of faithful Christians, but who had been struck down dead, with falsehood upon their tongues! Fearful warning to all who think lightly of the guilt of untruth!

Mr. Curtis closed the Bible. "Such a history as that which I have just read," he remarked, "needs no comment of mine. We see in it written, as with letters of fire, what falsehood is in the sight of the Lord! Now, to return to the subject on which I was speaking, I wish all here to know that a clue, though a slight one, has been discovered as to the real author of the mischief done. The footprint of a boy has been left on the sod!" A thrill at the words ran through the assembly; the scholars looked one at another, and then fixed their eager eyes on the speaker, gazing open-mouthed, as if they expected that the next

moment his finger would be stretched forth to point out the offender.

"A boy!" repeated the vicar, emphatically; "perhaps one of these now before me! A facsimile of the footprint has been carefully taken on paper, and I intend to-morrow to compare it with the boots of each one here present, unless—as I hope and trust—he who broke the glass will earn the respect and confidence of all who know him by frankly, honestly, nobly, confessing the truth at once."

Again there was that kind of electric thrill through the throng, again the boys turned inquiring looks one upon another.

"In such case," continued the clergyman, "I shall do everything in my power to shield that boy from the punishment which his mischievous act has deserved; I shall use my influence to procure his full pardon from Sir Lacy. But even if he have something to bear, it will be more than made up to him by the satisfaction of feeling that, in confessing, he has done what is manly and right; that he has saved an innocent man from distress;

that he himself has no sudden shameful disclosure to fear ; that he has earned a character for honor, the respect of his comrades, the approval of conscience ; and that he has put on that Girdle of Truth without which, whatever he may call himself, or think himself, he can be a Christian only in name."

Mr. Curtis knelt down, and all the scholars followed his example. Very fervent was the vicar's prayer to God, that He might give to all present grace and courage ever to speak the truth, to conceal nothing that ought to be confessed, remembering that a great Day is coming when, before assembled myriads of angels and men, the most secret things shall be manifest, when we shall know even as we are known ! There was some encouragement to the clergyman in the earnest "amen" from the boys, which followed his prayer.

"I hope that your words have made an impression, Henry," said Mrs. Curtis to her husband, as they sat together that night in the little study. The vicar had been reading aloud



to his wife, but the minds of both had wandered from the book.

"Why, we have no evidence beyond your little slip of paper, my love, and ——," Mr. Curtis was interrupted by the sound of a timid ring at the door-bell: faint as it was, both the vicar and his wife instinctively turned to listen, and nothing was said by either till the maid opened the study-door with, "the glazier's little boy says that he wishes to speak with you, sir." Mrs. Curtis knew Stephen White to be one of the scholars, and her heart beat fast with expectation.

"Ask him to step in here," said the vicar.

A thin, sly, slouching boy soon stood at the entrance, and then, after being twice desired to come forward, moved one or two steps into the room. He hung his head, fumbled with the buttons of his jacket, and looked the picture of confusion and shyness.

"I am glad to see you here, Stephen," said Mr. Curtis, encouragingly; "speak out freely, and tell me what you have come for to-night."

"Please, sir," stammered forth the boy,

"you said as how you would try to get me off."

Mrs. Curtis could hardly refrain from an exclamation of pleasure, as she dropped her work on her knee.

"I will keep my promise to an honest truthful boy, who, having done a wrong and a foolish action, is going to make what amends are in his power."

Stephen White looked ready to cry, and put the back of his hand up to his face.

"Why did you break the glass?" asked the vicar, seeing that in this case silence was clearly consent.

"I thought as how it would give father a job," faintly stuttered forth the boy.

"And how came you to have the ball, the leaden ball, that was found in the hot-house?"

"I picked it up on the road yesterday," said Stephen, "and put it in my pocket along with the stones. I didn't think, indeed I didn't, of getting the sailor into trouble."

"I do not doubt you, my boy," cried the vicar; then, turning to his wife, he added,

"Eliza, my love, just write down his words; you and I will sign the paper as witnesses, and I'll carry it myself to Sir Lacy Barton's this very night."

"But O, sir!" cried Stephen in alarm, "you will, you will get me out of this scrape!"

"I'll do my best," answered the vicar, "and I've little doubt but that I shall succeed."

Mrs. Curtis, with a hand that trembled with joyful excitement, had already dipped a pen into ink, and a clear brief statement of the whole truth was soon drawn up and signed, first by Stephen in round text, very shaky and uneven, then by the pastor and his lady as witnesses.

"I am so glad," said the vicar's wife, as she brought to her husband his hat and stick, and a comforter to protect him from the night air.—"I am so thankful that the character of that gallant tar is now cleared from all suspicion."

"And I am as glad and thankful," said the vicar, looking at Stephen White as he spoke, "that one of my boys, resolving not to add sin

unto sin, has come forward with a brave confession, and that I shall always be able henceforth to trust his honor and his word."

Stephen gave a great sigh of relief; a weight was lifted off from the heart of the boy; he felt that now he could bear even the risk of being sent to prison.

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## IX.

### CLEARING UP.

"A PRECIOUS scrape Uncle Ned has got himself into!" exclaimed Dan on the following morning, as he blew the steam from his bowl of hot milk and bread. "He'll be had up afore the magistrate to-day, and then clapped into jail for I don't know how long!"

"If he'd only had the wit to say that he'd never entered them woods!" exclaimed Bessy.

"Ah! he won't be atwitting me again for what he calls 'a mean thing, a senseless, a

wicked,'—we shan't be hearing no more that a liar is 'a sneak, a coward, a fool!'"

"Don't make too sure of that, my lad!" cried a loud cheery voice at the door. Bessy and Dan both started up in surprise, as Mr. Curtis and the sailor entered the cottage.

"Well, if ever! is he cleared?" exclaimed Bessy, reading an answer at once in the beaming face of her brother.

"Yes, cleared, come off with flying colors," said the vicar; "truth has ever the victory at last."

"Why," exclaimed the wondering Dan, "here comes Sir Lacy himself, at this hour of the day!"

In bustled the knight with his flushed face and his bushy white whiskers, but looking a different man from what he had done on the previous day. Notwithstanding a violent temper, which led often to passion, and not unfrequently to injustice, there was something kindly and generous still in the character of Sir Lacy.

"I could not rest," he said, as to the utter

amazement of the Peeles he held out his hand to the sailor, "I could not rest till I had told you how much I regret yesterday's mistake. But you'll own that appearances were against you."

"Ay, ay, sir, things looked ill," replied Ned.

"I should wish—I should like," began the knight, half pulling a sovereign out of his waistcoat pocket, but Ned instinctively drew back, with a feeling utterly incomprehensible to Mrs. Peele and her son.

"No, sir; if you do me a favor, please kindly to let off the little chap who bravely spoke out the truth and cleared me."

"I've done that already, at the request of my good friend the vicar," said the knight. "I want to do something else, my fine fellow, to show my feeling towards yourself."

"Then, sir, if you'd have the kindness not to send my sister here adrift at Michaelmas: she has a love for her little cabin, and is sore loath to leave it."

"As long as you remain here," said the

knight, "I give you my word that the cottage shall stand."

Bessy poured out a torrent of thanks and blessings to which no one gave heed, while Ned Franks simply replied, "I thank you, sir, kindly." Then, turning towards the vicar, he expressed in few but heartfelt words his gratitude towards him and his lady.

"Depend upon it, Ned Franks," said Mr. Curtis, "a man who will not speak an untruth either for fear or for favor, is never likely to want a friend. He only can walk on the straight path freely, firmly, fearlessly, who keeps the Master's command in mind, and wears the Girdle of Truth."

## II.

# The Breastplate of Righteousness.

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## I.

### SMALL LEAKS.

"YOU'LL never succeed, Ned!" cried Bessy Peele, with a little laugh, as she stood watching her maimed brother's attempts to write a letter. Twice the wind coming through the cottage door had sent his paper fluttering to the ground; Ned had raised it, and then tried to fix it by placing a pebble upon it, but the paper had slipped from under the pebble as soon as the sailor had begun to write. "It's not much," continued Bessy, "that a one-armed man can do."

"He can polish up your window, Bessy, and carry your basket, and get your garden into trim order," answered the sailor with cheerful



good humor ; and leaving the cottage for a few moments, Ned soon returned with a brick, the weight of which as effectually fastened down the sheet as if he had had a left hand to rest upon it. "Safe at anchor at last!" cried Ned; "but this is a clumsy way of getting over the difficulty. Necessity, folks say, is the mother of invention ; I'll get the carpenter, as soon as I have the ready rhino to pay for it, to screw on some bit of timber to this maimed stump of mine, with something like a hook at the end ; 'twill serve almost as well as a hand, and save me and my friends no end of trouble."

"Not a bad thought!" cried Bessy, who was apt to grumble at having to give the little assistance which the one-armed sailor required ; "you needn't wait, Ned, till you've the money. Bill Jones, who works at the carpenter's, is a handy lad, and owes me a deal of kindness for nursing his mother in sickness ; he'll manage to look out a good bit of hard wood and a hook, and will make what you want cleverly, and never say a word about payment."

"I'd rather wait till I've shot in my

locker," said Ned; "the poor lad's time is his money."

"His master's rather," observed Bessy. "But old Stone is an easy-going man, and does not keep a very sharp look out. Why, Bill Jones—a good fellow is he—made a little chest of drawers for his mother, all of mahogany wood, and I don't believe that his master so much as guessed that he had not been working from morning till 'night every day in the week at the fittings in Sir Lacy Barton's study."

Ned had begun his letter, but he raised his head, and the ink dried on his pen as he inquired, "Do you mean that he helped himself to his master's wood, and used up the time, which belonged to his master to make a chest for his mother? and do you call him 'good' for this?"

"I do call him good, and clever too!" answered Bessy, sharply; "isn't it right for a lad to care for his mother? and wouldn't it be right for him to do a good turn for a poor maimed sailor, who has lost his arm serving the Queen?"

"Would it be right in Bill Jones to carry off Sir Lacy's purse to give to his mother; or, if I chanced to be in want, to help a poor maimed Jack-tar like me?"

"How can you ask such idle questions?" cried Bessy Peele, in a tone of contempt; "why, if Bill Jones did a thing like that, he'd be clapped into jail directly."

"Keep to the question, mistress!" said Ned, with a playful twinkle in his bright blue eye; "I didn't ask whether it would be *safe* for Bill to take Sir Lacy's purse out of love for his mother, or kindness for me, but whether it would be *right* for him to be generous at the expense of another man."

"Taking a purse! That would be downright stealing!" cried Bessy.

"And are not the wood and the labor he pays for as much the carpenter's property as the purse is Sir Lacy Barton's? Is it not just as wrong to rob the one as the other?"

"I never knew a man with such particular notions as you have!" cried Bessy, tossing her head; "you're always pulling

one up sharp with the question whether a thing is right !”

“Because,” said Ned Franks, gravely, “we have to do with a righteous God. Mind you, Bessy, the Bible is the only chart as is given us to steer by, and when one sees in that chart, *provide things honest in the sight of all men,\** —*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much, and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much,†* one learns that the safe channel is a very narrow channel indeed, and that if we don’t carefully keep the right course, we shall run the vessel aground.”

“Well,” said Bessy, as she laid out some linen to iron, “I for one will never believe that the great God above ever notices such little matters as these you speak of.”

“Maybe you’d have thought it *a little matter* for Eve to pluck a fruit, but ’twas a matter that let in death and misery into a world,” said Ned. “The skipper of the first craft as ever I sailed in thought it *a little matter* when, one evening, our vessel just touched on a rock,

\* Rom. xii. 17.

† Luke xvi. 10.

as he fancied ; he smoked his pipe, drank his grog, and turned into his cabin, and never dreamed of the small leak down below, till he was wakened in the morning with the cry of 'Three feet water in the hold !' The vessel was as nigh lost as could be, with all the hands on board. And 'tis so with our souls, Bessy Peele. The little sins, as we call them, are the little leaks in the timber, and if one goes to the bottom, 'tis all the same, whether the water came in by a big hole or a small one."

Bessy banged down her hot iron on the shirt before her with a noise and bustle which seemed to say, "I want no more of this preaching." Ned Franks quietly dipped his pen again and went on with his letter. Presently Bessy looked towards the door of her cottage.

"I thought Norah would have been here afore this," she observed ; "she generally manages to walk over early from the town."

"You said, if I remember right, that her mistress kindly allowed her to visit home the first Monday in every month."

"Yes," replied Bessy Peele, "and it's a

great pleasure it is for Norah and me to meet. She's a good girl, if ever there was one. I've had a deal more comfort in her than in Dan. She has been in her place now for more than a year, and I don't believe that Mrs. Martin has had ever a fault to find with my girl."

"What sort of a lady is Mrs. Martin?" asked Ned.

"Oh! one of your saintly ones," cried Bessy; "always has my girl up to read the Bible to her of an evening, and sees that she goes to church once or twice every Sunday. The lady's getting a little old, and a little blind, Norah says, and can't afford to give good wages, but a respectable place like that is a stepping-stone to a better."

"Bessy," cried the sailor, "if your girl is moored in a safe good harbour, don't you be in haste to have her heave her anchor and hoist sail; there's more to be thought of in a place than the mere matter of wages."

"Ah! but"—began Mrs. Peele, but she interrupted herself with an exclamation of pleasure—"here she is!" as a bright, pretty-look-

ing girl of fourteen ran eagerly into the cottage.

Norah, for it was she, was warmly welcomed by her mother, and then presented to the one-armed sailor. "Here's your uncle, my dear, whom you never seen afore, who's been in the storms and the wars."

"And who is heartily glad to see you," cried Ned.

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## II.

### THE LITTLE MAID.

NED and Norah very soon made friends with one another. There was a cheerful kindliness about the maimed sailor, that set the young girl at her ease.

"He seems so frank and pleasant," thought Norah, and there's such a bright honest look in his eyes, that I'm sure I shall like him extremely."

"She's a trim little vessel," thought the sailor, "with a pretty figure-head of her own; but I wish that she carried a little less bunting; she'd look better without all those flowers."

Norah had indeed a sweet innocent face, but her dress was not such as beseemed her station in life—it showed an effort to look fine, which did not prevent it from looking shabby. The gay-colored dress was stuck out by a hoop; the bonnet, which was rather an old one, was trimmed with some large half-faded pink flowers; to the simple-minded sailor it became the young maiden so ill that he was glad when it was taken off, and Norah's neatly braided hair appeared the sole ornament of her head.

But Mrs. Peele was not of the sailor's opinion; "My dear, what pretty flowers!" she exclaimed, taking up the bonnet in her hand, and turning it round to admire the trimming.

"Sophy Puller gave the flowers to me: was it not kind?" said Norah. "And she gave me this too," she added, pulling out of her



dress a gaudy glass brooch, made to imitate diamonds and rubies.

Mrs. Peele was charmed with the brooch, and handed it over to Ned, who held it between his finger and thumb, looked at it for a moment, and then returned it in silence to its owner. "Who is Sophy Puller?" asked he, thinking to himself. "I hope that the giver of that trumpery is not of a piece with her gift."

"She's a milliner's apprentice, and such a dear girl!" cried the artless Norah. "She often drops in to tea, and we have such famous gossips together over our bread and butter! It is so friendly and pleasant!"

"And do you get your mistress's leave to entertain this messmate?" inquired the sailor.

Norah's smooth cheek flushed, and she looked a little embarrassed, as, without answering her uncle's question directly, she said, "I don't think there can be any harm."

"Harm, indeed!" exclaimed Bessy Peele, warmly; "it would be hard indeed if a poor

girl could not give a slice of bread and butter to a friend."

"At her mistress's expense," added Ned.

Norah appeared uneasy and confused, and turned her inquiring eyes on her uncle, as if he had suggested some painful doubt which had never before entered into her mind. Mrs. Peele called away her attention.

"Let's see what you've brought in that parcel, my darling; it's never empty-handed as Norah comes to her mother!"

The parcel was carried to the window, and Ned Franks, who had no curiosity to know its contents, sat down again to his writing. His ear was, however, soon caught by his sister's scornful exclamation, "Tea indeed! you don't mean to say that Mrs. Martin gives four shillings a pound for this powdery trash!"

"Bessy," said the sailor, looking up with a smile, "if the lady kindly sends you a present, don't you take it for better or worse?"

Again Norah looked at her uncle with that perplexed inquiring gaze, and seemed about to speak; but her mother gave her a nudge, with

a whisper, "Say nothing—he takes things so oddly." Neither the nudge nor the words escaped the quick perception of Ned. "Sunken rock!" thought he; "I must sound that poor simple child as to how she came by that tea, if I chance to catch her alone."

Dan Peele soon came home from the fields, and his sharp cunning features were lighted up with such honest joy at sight of his sister, that Ned Franks said to himself, "there's a warm corner in the heart of that boy—I've judged the poor fellow hardly."

"I'm always so glad when you come home, Norah," cried Dan, almost dancing with glee, making the party laugh by adding, "then mother gives us such a thundering big pudding, and puts on the jam so thick."

Norah's presence indeed added not a little to the cheerfulness of the little circle at the family meal. She laughed and chatted gaily, and told many a little incident of her life with Mrs. Martin.

"Did I ever tell you, mother, of my first trying to read aloud to my mistress? The

dear teacher at our school used to say that I read well—but wasn't I a bit frightened at the notion of having to read aloud in a drawing-room! I could hardly get up my courage when the bell rang, and I had to go up on purpose to read. There was the old lady in her big arm-chair, and the lamp with its shade on the table. 'Take a seat, Norah,' said my mistress kindly, 'and go on with the work where I left off.' 'I'm glad it's to be sewing, not reading,' thought I; but wasn't I puzzled when not a bit of work could I see, nothing on the table but one old-looking book! I peeped about here and there, without daring to get up from my chair, wondering where the work could be hidden, while my mistress was wondering all the while why I did not begin. 'What are you waiting for, Norah?' said she. 'Please, ma'am, I can't find no work, I think it must have dropped under the table!'"

Norah's little story was duly laughed at, especially by Dan, who did not understand the joke, as he knew as little as his sister had done, that a book can be spoken of as "a work."

"O, and another time I was so stupid!" Norah went on, laughing at the recollection; "I was reading to mistress a large new book, that had a good many pictures in it, when she dropped asleep, as she sometimes does. When, just waking from her nap, 'Norah,' says she, 'I'd like to look at the plates.' Up jumped I with a 'yes, ma'am, directly; shall I bring the kitchen plates or the china?'"

Again there was a burst of merriment at the blunder of the little maiden.

"Do you like the reading, Norah?" asked Ned.

"Why, yes, sometimes," answered the lively young girl, "only the sermons are rather too long."

"Sermons!" exclaimed Dan and his mother in a breath; and the latter added, "I hope you get some other reading besides that."

"O, yes, history and travels; and then, you know, Sophy Puller lends me books to read by myself."

"What sort of books?" asked the sailor.

"O, delightful books!" exclaimed Norah. I'm in the middle of one now, all about a dreadfully wicked woman who killed her husband, and I think she'll be hanged at the end—but she had great excuses you know."

"That must be jolly reading," cried Dan; but Ned Franks shook his curly head.

"I very much doubt that such reading is good for our little lass," observed he.

"Well, I own, it's very tiresome to have to leave off in the middle to sweep a room or cook a dinner," cried the girl, "but I sit up late at night to make up."

"I don't look on that Sophy Puller as your true friend," observed Ned Franks.

"O, don't say that—she is so kind: she wanted me to come out and spend the evening with her sometimes, when she has such fun, and dancing, and larking with her companions. I should have liked of all things to go; but when I asked mistress she shook her head and said she did not approve of young girls being out late at night."

"I say, wasn't that a shame!" exclaimed Dan.

"It's a hard thing that she should keep you so tight, and not let you have a bit of fun, when you're slaving all day," cried Bessy.

"A hard thing is it," said Ned Franks, "that the lady won't let your child go swimming amongst the sharks?"

"If I was you, Norah," cried Dan, "I'd slip off without leave after the old dame was abed; you said she shut up soon after eight."

"That's just what Sophy told me," said Norah.

"But you was afraid, I s'pose, of being caught," observed Dan.

"I was more afraid," replied Norah, simply, "that mistress might be taken ill in the night, and you know, she depends upon me."

"God help that poor child—she's beset with snares," thought the one-armed sailor. "When she comes home she learns nothing but dishonesty, covetousness, and untruth; at her place there's an evil influence drawing her in like a whirlpool to folly, and may

be to worse. And she so simple and artless. Simple and artless *now*, but if she have much to do with that Sophy Puller it is not long that she'll keep so. I should like to drop in a word of warning, but I can't do it here, as Bessy is always driving on the opposite tack. Norah," he said aloud, "will you let me walk back with you in the evening?"

"I should be so glad to have you," cried the girl, "and then I need not hurry back so early. Mistress told me unless my brother or some one would see me home, I was not to stay out after sunset."

"A careful mistress," observed Ned.

"The cross old crab!" exclaimed his nephew, both speaking at the same moment.

"O, no, she's not cross," cried Norah; "my mistress is good, very good; I never knew any one like her but Mr. Curtis, our vicar, and my dear kind teacher at school."

"You'd like her a deal better, I guess, if she wasn't so strict," said Mrs. Peele.

"I don't know, I'm not quite sure of that," replied Norah, in a hesitating tone. "I should



like Mrs. Martin to see more company, and to let me have a little more freedom, but she does not keep me in out of crossness. If you only knew how good she is to the poor, and how dearly she loves her Bible, and how patient she is when in pain, and she suffers a great, great deal, 'specially from her poor eyes, but she never murmurs at all!" The girl's face kindled with emotion as she spoke of her kind old mistress, and Ned watched it with a feeling of pleasure, while his heart warmed towards his young niece.

"Blessings on the child, they've not spoilt her yet," thought he. "She sees the light, and she's bearing towards it; shame is it that those nearest to her should try to turn her out of her course."

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“I do like to look on such a sunset,” Norah said, adding softly,  
“It makes one think of Heaven.”

Christian's Panoply.

p. 83.

### III.

#### PROFESSION AND PRACTICE.

"MIND now that you manage to give the old woman the slip, and have a jolly night of it with your friend Sophy Puller"—such were the words with which Dan Peele parted from his sister, as she set out with the sailor on her long walk back to the county town in which her mistress resided.

It was a glorious evening. The sun had just sunk below the horizon, but lines of glowing fire showed where his orb had dipped below the blue hills, and his beams had left a rich rosy flush on the clouds that floated above. Ned Franks, as he gazed on that beautiful sky, felt that the young girl who tripped on by his side shared his sense of peaceful enjoyment. Norah was the first to break silence. "I do like to look on such a sunset," she said, adding softly, "it makes one think of heaven."

"The home we're bound for," said Ned.

"I hope so," murmured Norah, in a tone that was scarcely above a whisper.

"And how do you think we are ever to get to heaven?" asked the sailor.

"O, surely you know!" answered Norah, with some surprise at the question, since, from several words dropped by himself in the course of the day, and from what she had heard of him from her mother, Norah had judged her uncle to be a very religious man. "My mistress has often told me that all believers go to heaven, because the Lord Jesus died for them, and has washed away all their sins."

"Right, quite right," said the sailor fervently; "that's the pole-star Faith always points to, that's what we must always keep in view. But who are *believers*, Norah? Though heaven lie straight afore us all, I take it that few will be so bold as to say that *all* who are called Christians will get to heaven."

Norah did not answer for two or three minutes, and then said, "are not believers those who love the Lord Jesus Christ?"

"Right again!" cried Ned Franks. "And

now tell me, Norah, is it not true that when we love any one much, we are ready and glad to do something for his sake?"

"O yes, indeed!" exclaimed Norah. "I've often thought that I should like to do something for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. I was lately reading to my mistress of the early martyrs, and then it seemed to be such a great and noble thing to die for religion."

"It is just as great and noble a thing, Norah, my girl, to *live* for religion, and that is what all believers must do; for we only deceive ourselves when we think that without *obedience* to God we have either true faith or love."

"I don't quite know what you mean," said Norah.

"Do you remember the words of Christ, *He that taketh not up his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me?*"\*

"I can't tell what my cross is," said Norah, "nor how I can take it up."

"We take up our cross whenever we do for conscience what we would not do for pleasure,"

\* Matthew x. 38.

observed Ned, "or when we give up for the Lord's sake what we would willingly have for our own. To come to the point, Norah—for I like plain sailing, and you'll understand twenty times better if I speak of a simple fact—would you mind telling me frankly whether Mrs. Martin gave you that tea?"

"No," replied Norah, faintly.

"Thank God, she at least is truthful," thought the sailor. "And did you," he continued aloud, "buy that tea for your mother?"

Norah silently shook her head.

"Then tell me, child, how did you get it?"

Ned bent down his tall head, but could scarcely catch the low answer, "I took it."

"Just what I feared," said Ned Franks.

"But indeed—indeed," cried Norah Peele, "I did not know that I was doing so wrong! I would not have touched money or anything like that, but—but mistress would never miss it, I thought, and mother always expects some little present when I come home, and I've nothing to spare out of my wages, and so many,

many do the same thing. I never was told that it was such a sin!"

"Did not conscience tell you, my child? did not the Word of God tell you where it exhorts *servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again, NOT PURLOINING, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things?*" \*

"I did wrong, very wrong," murmured Norah, "but it is so difficult to deny one's self, and to deny others, and always to keep duty before one, however hard it may be."

"That is our cross," observed Ned.

"But I thought," said Norah, "indeed I'm sure, that both my mistress and the clergyman have said over and over again, that the Lord bore the cross for us, and that now we've nothing to do to earn our own salvation; we've just to believe, and we're safe."

"Do you forget what the Bible says, *the devils also believe and tremble.*" †

\* Titus ii. 9.

† James ii. 9.



"They do not believe and love, as we do."

"They do not believe and *obey*, as we must do, Norah. What were the words of the Lord to those whom He called to be His disciples—were they not *follow Me?* and if we follow the Holy Saviour, think you it can be on a path of sin? God forbid! Nay, St. John says, *whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.*\* We must put on the breastplate of righteousness, if we would follow the Lord."

"But no one, not the best, has nothing more to do with sin," murmured Norah.

"True enough," said Ned Franks, stopping in his walk, as if to give more force to his words, "but they have to do with it as an *enemy*, not as a *master*; they have to *fight* it, not to *obey*. Look you here, Norah," continued the sailor, seeking an illustration from objects most familiar to his own mind; "if you and I saw a frigate, with the Union-Jack of old England floating aloft, would we not say at once that she was a British vessel?"

\* 1 John iii. 9.

"Yes," replied Norah, wondering at the abrupt turn in the conversation.

"But if we saw her, with all sails set, making right for a Russian port, and if we could see through a glass that there were Russian sailors in the rigging, a Russian pilot at the helm, a Russian captain giving commands, should we believe that the frigate was English, if half-a-dozen Union Jacks were hoisted from the mast?"

"No," replied Norah, quickly, "we should think that the flags were hung up for a sham."

"And it is a sham, nothing but a sham," exclaimed Ned, walking on again, and faster than before, "for man, woman, or child to set up Christian profession, when they care nothing for Christian practice; to hang out, as it were, the flag of the Cross, while self-will steers where Satan directs, and they're bearing right on for the rock of destruction. Think you that a *real* Christian would willingly hold parley with any sin, far less welcome it upon deck? No, it is his enemy, his

Saviour's enemy, which he must resist to the death. If it tries to board, as 'tis always trying, he must yield it not a foot, not an inch; he must hurl it over the bulwarks, throw it into the sea, give no quarter to sin, in the name and in the strength of the Great Captain of his salvation!" Ned's tone was raised, his eyes flashed, and he instinctively clenched his hand as thus, in figurative language, he described the Christian's secret struggle against sin. Norah felt roused and animated, though she hardly realized the full meaning of what the sailor had said.

"Do you not think," asked the girl, after a short pause, "that it is not easy for us always to tell what is sin and what is not? People view the same thing in such different ways."

"It seems easy enough to me," replied the simple-minded tar; "we've not to trouble ourselves with what this person thinks, or that person fancies, but come straight for our sailing orders to the Lord. Is that what He would approve? Is that what He would

have done in my place? I guess, Norah, that you would not have taken that tea had you known that your mistress's eye was upon you, much less had you felt that your heavenly Captain looked on."

Norah drooped her head, and was silent.

"So you see, dear child," continued Ned, "that we've a daily battle to fight, and a daily cross to take up, if our faith is a *real* thing, if our religion be not a sham. The Lord's Cross was *the cross of sacrifice*—no one but Himself could bear that, and that He endured for our sakes; our cross is *the cross of daily self-denial*, which we must take up for His sake. If we've anything, great or small, that is displeasing to our Lord, be it a bad habit, a sinful pleasure, a foolish companion, or even a book, we must give it up at once, and forever. A Christian must be holy, for his Master is holy; he must wear *the breastplate of righteousness*, the guard for the heart against sin."

"I should like to wear it," said Norah, whose thoughts had lately been more turned

to the subject of religion than they had ever been in her childhood's home.

"Then I've but one more bit of advice for you, my girl," cried the sailor; "'tis one I should like you to get from wiser lips than mine. Ask the Lord for that breastplate of righteousness, for one that will stand rough work and hard blows; don't trust in any pasteboard good resolutions of your own;" and with this simple but important word of counsel, Ned Franks closed a conversation which was to leave a lasting impression upon the mind of his youthful niece.

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#### IV.

##### PUTTING ON ARMOR.

NORAH PEELE was of an affectionate disposition and an eager spirit, and she was at an age when there is an attraction in anything new. What she had heard of religion from Mrs. Martin, and at the church which she con-

stantly attended, had drawn her heart towards her Saviour, and made her delight in feeling that she owed all her hopes of heaven to Him. Norah took pleasure in going to church, especially in listening to the sweet music, and her eyes would fill with tears when she heard or read of the sufferings of Christ. But Norah's religion had been one of feeling rather than of practice; its power had not overcome evil habits which she had acquired in her home. It had been rather like fragrant oil floating on the top of a vase of water, than like wine, which spreads through the whole, giving color and sweetness to every drop. Norah's religion had been too much like a Sunday dress, not worn in her working hours; it had not made her perfectly honest, just, and true in all her dealings. Norah had *come to Christ*, like the rich young man of whom we read in the gospel, but she had not yet learned to *follow Christ* in the steps of His holy life.

The few blunt words of the sailor had opened Norah's eyes to the truth. Had she hitherto deserved the name of a Christian at all?

had not her's been a false profession? If so, should she not, from henceforth, resolve to lead a new life, to *be* what she had wished to *appear*, to deny sinful self, to take up her cross and follow her Lord?

Norah, with the eagerness of her nature, determined to do all this, perhaps without sufficiently counting the cost, perhaps without dwelling enough on the warning, "ask the Lord for that breastplate of righteousness which will stand rough work and hard blows; don't trust in any pasteboard resolutions of your own." From henceforth, Norah determined that she would let her light so shine before men, that they should see her good works, and glorify her Father in heaven.

When Norah had fulfilled her usual evening duties, read to Mrs. Martin, made her tea, seen to her comforts, and left her in quiet repose for the night, the young girl sought her own little room, with her mind and heart still full of what her sailor uncle had said. She had usually amused herself at night with reading the trashy novel lent by Sophy Puller, but

now for the first time Norah Peele paused before she opened the book.

“I wonder if *this* is one of the things which I must give up?” thought Norah; “certainly it makes me sit up very late at night, and mistress wonders how I can use up so many candles, and she has often told me to go to bed early, for fear I should fall asleep over my work, and set the house on fire. And then these novels do fill my head so full of thoughts—some very bad ones I fear! While I was reading the Bible to mistress, I could not help my mind running on that dreadful woman and that horrible murder, they interested me so! Yet what is the harm in reading; how shall I know if it is really my duty to give up this pleasure?” Norah half opened the dirty volume. “What did my uncle say? He told me to bring everything straight to the Lord, to ask—Is this what He would approve, what He would have done in my place?” Norah shut the book, and thrust it into a drawer: her conscience had given an honest answer to the question, and the pleasure which she felt



from the consciousness that she had for once exercised self-denial, quite made up to the little maid for the amusement which she had lost. Norah went to rest that night more happy than she had ever felt before.

But when Norah awoke in the gray dawn, and rose to perform her round of daily duties, the first fervor of excited feeling had had a little time to cool, and she began more seriously to consider what difficulties might beset her in her new course of practical obedience. A variety of things, small in themselves, yet of great importance, because they were matters of conscience, pressed on the young girl's mind. Must she not so much as take a reel of cotton that was not her own—not touch that plateful of sweet cakes which had hitherto offered an unresisted temptation? Must she act at every moment of her life with the sense that God's eye was upon her? Did real faith require all this?

But what weighed most of all on poor Norah was the idea of Sophy Puller and her stolen meals at the house. Norah was a lively young

girl, exceedingly fond of mirth, and though she loved her good old mistress, the idea of having no society more gay than that of the invalid lady seemed to Norah as dreary as that of a life in prison. Sophy's gossip, Sophy's books, Sophy's friendship, had been the great delight of an existence which, without them, so Norah believed, she would find insupportably dull.

"It will be dreadfully difficult to know what to say to Sophy," was Norah's reflection, as when going at noon to make some little purchase for her lady, she turned the subject over in her mind for at least the twentieth time. "She has not talked with my uncle, and I shall never be able to make her understand what he thinks,—she will consider it all so absurd! I almost hope that dear Sophy will not come to see me to-day, above all that she may not come at tea-time! I could hardly bear to let her see that I think it wrong to entertain her at my lady's expense! She would laugh at my scruples,—or else she would be so hurt and angry! O, it would grieve me to vex or offend her! To lose Sophy for a friend would

be a dreadful trial indeed ! It would be more than I could endure !”

As Norah pursued her way, with her brow knit with anxious thought, as if the cares of a nation were upon her, she chanced to pass a haberdasher's shop, which had always for her great attraction, as one of her besetting weaknesses was a love of dress, which weakness had been greatly fostered by her intercourse with Sophy. Instinctively Norah paused before the large plate-glass window, and looked at the tempting array of fashionable dresses set out with prices affixed.

“What—that black silk robe with flounces and jacket complete for only two guineas ! If ever I saw such a bargain !” exclaimed Norah, whose great ambition was to possess such a Sunday dress, as Sophy had told her that black silk was “the most genteel thing in the world, and made a girl look just like a real lady at once !” “But two whole guineas !” reflected Norah, “whenever shall I get that to spend on a gown, when I can hardly afford even this colored print that I wear !”

A carriage drew up at the door, and an elegantly dressed lady descended and entered the shop.

“There goes one who can spend guineas upon guineas, and buy everything pretty and new, without any trouble, and without feeling that she is doing anything wrong. How happy she must be in that lovely bonnet and feathers, and satin mantle trimmed with such beautiful lace!” So thought the poor silly child, who had little idea of any troubles of a different kind from her own. “I’m sure,” and Norah breathed a sigh of discontent, “I’m sure that the poor have much harder trials to bear than the rich, they need much more self-denial, their cross is much harder to bear!” Norah turned away from the shop with a feeling of bitter envy, to which covetousness had given rise. Against such strokes of the enemy her newly-tried breastplate was not proof.

The next shop passed by Norah was of very different appearance from the last, but offered temptations of its own.

“A mangle—and to be had for five pounds!

That is just what mother is always wanting! O, how I wish that I had money to buy it! I wonder why things are made so uneven in the world; why some have thousands of pounds to throw away on their pleasures, while others have a life-long struggle to earn their daily bread!"

Norah returned to the house out of spirits, because, though she hardly knew it, a mistrust of the love of her Heavenly Father had crept like a shadow over her heart. She felt more than ever how dreadfully hard it would be to risk offending Sophy, and that to follow the Lord fully is no light and easy thing.

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## V.

### PROVING THE ARMOUR.

"WELL, Norah, my darling, I've just slipped in for five minutes to see you. I can't stop long, but just pour me out a cup like a dear,

I'm half grilled in this dreadful hot weather!" —and the milliner's girl threw herself on a chair, and began fanning herself with her pocket-handkerchief.

For the first time Norah was sorry to see her friend, and especially to see her at tea. Though Norah had been so often during the day thinking over what course she should take, and what words she should say, yet the sudden appearance of Sophy Puller seemed to take her by surprise.

"Quick, cut me a slice, for I must soon be off; plenty of butter you know; I thought that you promised me that this time I should taste the old lady's tartlets. Why, is anything the matter?" cried Sophy, who perceived a peculiar hesitation and confusion in the manner of Norah.

"You know, dear, that I went home yesterday and saw my sailor uncle,—the uncle who has lost his arm."

"Ah! yes; if I'd only time, I should like to hear all about him," said Sophy, "but I've come on a little bit of business, and I thought

it was best to drop in at tea-time; I knew that my darling would always make me welcome!"—here followed a caress, which made poor Norah feel more embarrassed than ever.

"My uncle said—my uncle thought—he heard about your coming, and he told me,"—every word of her studied explanation seemed to have escaped from Norah's mind; she stammered, and turned very red. Sophy looked at her in surprise.

"What on earth do you mean?" she inquired.

Norah's hand was upon the loaf, and she unconsciously squeezed it so tightly as to leave the mark of the pressure upon it.

"My uncle thought that I should tell my mistress when I have a friend at meals," stammered forth Norah, wondering at her own courage when the sentence was uttered.

"That old Mrs. Martin may be sure to have hot muffins ready for her!" cried Sophy, bursting into a merry laugh. Her mirth disconcerted her friend as much as her anger might have done.

"Uncle Ned doesn't think it—quite right," said Norah, looking down, "that I should entertain any guest at my lady's expense, and without her knowledge."

"Stuff and nonsense!" exclaimed Sophy Puller; "I think that uncle of yours must have lost his head as well as his arm, or he would not be putting such rubbish into your silly little mind!" and catching up the knife, and taking the loaf from Norah, Sophy began to make up for lost time by helping herself in good earnest.

"But"—began Norah, timidly—the milliner's girl cut her short.

"Now, don't be talking any more such stuff, Norah dear; you're not such a baby as to mind silly cant! I'll tell you what I've come here for to-day." Sophy went on talking as fast as a mouth full of bread and butter would let her. "You're going to have a treat—such a treat! There's an entertainment to-night in the Town Hall; you must have seen the big bills about it stuck upon every wall,—the famous juggler is to perform, who helps a dozen



people out of one bottle to a dozen different wines, and puts an extinguisher upon his wife, and makes her vanish into air, and who does a thousand other things more wonderful even than these! Now, you and I, my darling, are going to see him to-night."

"I cannot—I cannot indeed," said Norah, who nevertheless greatly desired to go.

"But I've got a ticket for you!" cried Sophy, pulling it out of her pocket, as if the sight of the bit of blue pasteboard must set all scruples at rest. "Mr. Green, he's the manager you know, he's a friend of my father; 'Peter Puller,' says he, 'shall have as many tickets as he likes, half-price.' O, you must come indeed, Norah, darling! The lads I told you of, and Bell and her brothers, are all to be of the party! 'twill be the rarest fun in the world!" Sophy took hold of the teapot, and helped herself to the tea.

"I should like it of all things," sighed Norah, "but I am sure that I would not get my mistress's leave."

"Then you'll go without it, to be sure—

just hand me the sugar, my dear—nothing can be more easily managed. I'll just tap at the door at ten minutes to nine; the door is left on the latch."

"But mistress bids me lock it, and put up the chain for the night, for fear of robbers," said Norah.

"You can do all that when you come home; you'll be back by eleven, you know; as for robbers and all that rubbish, only old women who are timid as mice ever dream of such things. Now, you must not look so grave, dear Norah. I've set my heart on your going, indeed I'll take no denial, when I've got the ticket and all. I'd never forgive you, never, if you disappointed me now."

It is needless to repeat all the arguments used by an unprincipled girl to persuade poor Norah to consent to do what her conscience condemned. Sophy never paused to consider that she was acting as Satan's servant, and doing the devil's work, in tempting her young simple friend from the straight narrow path of duty. Perhaps Sophy actually believed

that she was showing kindness to Norah. Be that as it may, the milliner's girl did not leave the house till she had wrung from the weakness of her friend a half-consent to be ready to go with her that night. Alas for poor human resolution! the first strong shaft of temptation had pierced it through and through.

Had the sailor's words, then, gone for nothing? had they effected no change whatever? Yes, one important point had been gained. Norah could no longer do wrong with an easy conscience; her eyes had been opened to the danger and guilt of what she had deemed *little sins*. Norah knew that *not one* could be harbored and indulged save at the peril of her soul. She felt that the religion which does not purify the life is not true religion at all.

Norah's mind was so restless and uneasy as she sat down to her work, that even the prospect of the amusement before her gave as much pain as pleasure. She dared not think of her uncle, far less of those truths which she had heard from his lips.

When we yield to one temptation we have

less power to resist another. Waters entering through the narrowest breach soon make for themselves a wider way. Norah sought relief from uneasy reflection in the very thing which she had so lately given up as wrong.

“I can’t go on with this tiresome darning,” exclaimed the young servant, flinging a bundle of stockings aside; “I must just have a glance at that book; I must just see if that wretched woman was hanged for murder after all.”

So, neglecting her duty, misusing her time, trying to silence her conscience, Norah plunged into the midst of a novel but too well suited to inflame her imagination and corrupt her mind. She was so deep in the interest of the story, that she started up with impatient annoyance at the sound of the bell which summoned her up to the drawing-room, to read to her mistress as usual.

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## VI.

## HELP IN NEED.

WELL was it for Norah Peele that a quiet time for thinking was thus forced upon her, unwilling as she felt at the moment to lay down her tempting novel, and obey her mistress's summons. When Norah entered the peaceful room, where the soft light of the shaded lamp fell on Mrs. Martin's placid face and silvery hair, as she sat with her hands clasped, and a look of much patience in her almost sightless eyes, Norah felt as if she had quitted a glaring theater, and come into a house of prayer. There was before her one who had long worn the breastplate of righteousness, and fought the good fight of faith, and who would soon receive the victor's crown from Him whom she loved and obeyed.

Norah took up the book which she was accustomed to read, but so pre-occupied was her mind with its own perplexing thoughts, that

she began at the first chapter at which she chanced to open the volume, without paying attention to a marker left in the proper place.

"Surely we have heard that before," said Mrs. Martin. Norah had not attended to one word of what she had been reading.

The girl was ashamed of her mistake, and at once set it right, but it was soon followed by another. Norah turned over two pages at once and read on, quite unconscious that her blunder rendered a sentence absolute nonsense.

Again Mrs. Martin recalled her to herself in a patient, gentle way; but Norah still read in so dull and lifeless a manner, that it could be no pleasure to hear her.

"You may shut the book, Norah," said the lady; "perhaps yesterday's long walk has tired you; I will only have my evening chapter from the Bible; there is no reading like that."

Norah took up the blessed volume, and now her attention wandered no more. The chapter read was the 22d of St. Luke. Con-

scious of her own backsliding, of the weakness which she had shown, of the evil intention which she had harbored after all her good resolutions, every verse which she read from the Bible seemed to Norah to convey a re-proach. At last, when she came to Peter's assurance that he would follow his Master to prison and to death, and the mournful warning which followed, Norah's voice failed her, and she paused for a minute to recover her own self-command.

"I am always thankful," said Mrs. Martin, "that St. Peter's fall has been recorded in Scripture: it puts us on our guard against our own weakness; it shows us that even faith and love like his were not enough to guard him from sin in the hour of temptation."

"Then what can guard?" faltered Norah.

"The grace of God's Holy Spirit, which we must seek for by prayer. It was that grace which made Peter, who had thrice denied his Lord, afterwards boldly confess Him in the presence of Caiaphas himself! It was that

grace that made Peter, who had been terrified at the words of a woman, afterwards nobly endure the terrible death of the cross ! Without God's grace we can do nothing, with it we can do all things ; His strength is made perfect in our weakness. Our daily prayer should be, ' Lord, give me thy Holy Spirit ! ' remembering the gracious promise, *Ask, and it shall be given you.*" \*

Norah read on to the end of the chapter in a low soft tone, and with a spirit humbled and subdued. Once again her voice failed her ; it was at the words, *the Lord turned and looked upon Peter!* She thought what that look of love and pity must have been, how it must have thrilled to the heart of the backsliding disciple ! And did not He who had watched the apostle, still mark the wanderings of His feeblest lamb ; was He not still ready thus to guide by his eye the erring one who longed once more to return to the straight path of duty ?

As soon as Norah's invalid mistress had

\* Matt. vii. 7.



retired to her early rest, Norah went to her own little room, not to prepare, as she had intended, to go out at night with her worthless companion, leaving the house exposed to robbers, and an aged lady in danger, if taken with sudden illness, of finding herself deserted, but to fall on her knees and ask forgiveness for the sinful purpose of her heart. Norah could not have put her prayer into words, but her soul's pleading was something like this—"O, Lord! help me! O, Lord! forgive me! I am a poor, foolish, sinful girl! The evil I would not, I do, and I leave my duties undone! O, give me Thy Holy Spirit; give me the breastplate of righteousness, strong and firm against every temptation, that I may know Thy will, and do Thy will, and follow my Saviour all my life, and be happy with Him forever!"

A few minutes before the church-clock struck nine, a shadow fell on the pavement in front of Mrs. Martin's dwelling, and there was the sound of a low rap, as of a stealthy hand on the panel of the door, followed by an

eager whisper, "quick, Norah, quick, we are late."

The door unclosed but a few inches, the chain prevented its opening wider. Young Norah stood behind it, the glare of the street lamp showing her pale, agitated face.

"O, Sophy, don't be angry; I may not—must not come. I have written my reasons on the paper in which this book is wrapped up; take it, and O, forgive me." Norah drew back as if afraid of trusting herself to say more.

Sophy, disappointed and angry, had snatched the novel out of Norah's hand. "I'll never believe, nor trust, nor speak to you again," she exclaimed, turning away with a burst of petty resentment. Perhaps Sophy hoped to hear Norah's voice entreating her to return; she only heard the rattle of the chain, and the sound of the closing door. Something firmer than panel, and stronger than iron or steel, had been now raised to be a barrier between Norah Peele and her false friend.

## VII.

## ANOTHER TRIUMPH.

How different is the importance given on earth and in Heaven to the same events! The famous speech, the brilliant entertainment, the political crisis, which fill columns of "The Times," and are the talk of eager thousands from one end of Britain to another, may seem as much beneath the notice of angels as bubbles floating on a stream; while the bright inhabitants of Heaven may hover over some humble mansion, to watch the struggle between right and wrong in one as lowly as the little servant-maid Norah. No passer-by would have given a second thought to the girl on her knees, cleaning Mrs. Martin's doorstep in the early morning, yet that poor simple servant had fought a battle, and won a victory, on which angels might look with interest, for the result of such triumphs will last when earth itself shall have passed away.

As Norah went on with her humble occupation, lifting up her heart as she did so in a silent hymn of thanksgiving, her attention was attracted by a small object that lay on the road close to the pavement. Norah rose, and, going to the spot, picked up a small canvas bag, which had probably been dropped there since the previous evening. Norah loosened the string, and opened the bag, to see what might be in it, but she almost dropped it again in her surprise at sight of its glittering contents.

"Sovereigns! all bright, new, golden sovereigns!" exclaimed the astonished Norah. She hastened into the house, shut the door, dropped on her knees, and emptied the bag into her lap, that she might count over the treasure without fear of being either disturbed or noticed.

"Two, four, six, eight! I had never so much money before in my life! O," cried Norah, clapping her hands, "I shall now be able to buy both the black silk dress and the mangle, and something for Sophy be-

sides, to make her forget last night, for I could not bear that there should be any bitter feeling between us!"

It was not unnatural that such should be the first thoughts that should rise to the mind of Bessy Peele's daughter. It must be remembered that Norah had not been brought up with strict ideas of honesty, that it was but lately that she had put on the breastplate of righteousness, or even desired to have that *holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.\** But the young Christian had only swerved from her course for a minute—conscience was still at the helm.

"What am I thinking of!" cried Norah, still on her knees, with the bright coin lying on her lap. "This money is not my own, I cannot honestly spend it. If I have found it, some one else must have lost it; I must give it back to its owner!" An expression of disappointment came over the young girl's face, but it was almost instantly chased away by a look like sunshine.

\* Hebrews xii. 14.

“O, here is another opportunity given me of showing my love to my Lord, of proving that my faith is real; that I am not hanging out false colors! Is it not an honor and a joy to do, or to give up anything to please my Heavenly Master?”

Norah caught up the coins, and hastily thrust them all back into the bag, counting them as she did so. She would not trust herself to look again at the glittering gold, she would not trust herself even to think what Mrs. Peele or Sophy would say if they knew that she now held so large a sum in her hands. Norah felt impatient for the time when Mrs. Martin would come down from her room, that she might give over the tempting bag into the charge of the lady, and ask her what would be the best way of finding out its owner. Norah could think of nothing else as she filled the kettle, spread the table, and made the toast for breakfast. She felt as if in possession of a very great secret, which she longed to disclose to her mistress.

“You must have received some good news,

Norah," was Mrs. Martin's remark, as she first met the beaming glance of her little servant.

"O ma'am! only see what I've found this morning on the road, not ten yards from the door, eight new sovereigns, all in this bag!" and Norah, with some excitement, placed the bag in the hand of her mistress.

"And what will you do with this?" asked the old lady.

"O ma'am! you know it's not mine, I thought you would kindly help me to find out who has lost it."

"Norah, you're the most honest girl that ever I met with!" burst involuntarily from the lips of her mistress.

Mrs. Martin had unintentionally touched a painful chord; Norah's awakened conscience started back from unmerited praise.

"O no, ma'am! don't say that!" cried the girl, surprised into a sudden confession, "I've not been faithful to you as I should; I've taken little things; I've had a guest at

my meals, but I mean never to do so more; I hope that you will forgive me!"

"Norah, I thank God for you!" said the old lady, tears rising into her eyes as she spoke. How warm went her words to the heart of Norah—no praise could have been so sweet!

Norah had unwittingly removed a weight from the mind of her gentle mistress. Mrs. Martin had had painful suspicions, which she had vainly tried to put away, as to the strict honesty of her young maid. She had often asked herself whether it might not be her duty to speak seriously to Norah on the subject, but had put off doing so from day to day, partly because the duty was painful to her tender sensitive spirit, partly because she tried to persuade herself that her dim sight and failing memory might have led her into error, and she would not distress her maid till she had clearer proof of her guilt. Norah's honesty about the money had for the moment entirely swept away all her lady's suspicions, and caused her to utter what a little consid-



ration might have made her retract; but Norah's frank confession entirely relieved Mrs. Martin's mind. That confession showed regret for the past, which was in itself an earnest of a future life of fidelity and truth. The lady felt that henceforth Norah would be more to her than a servant, one who would be her comfort, one whom she could trust, whom she could love.

Nothing more, however, was said by either mistress or maid on the subject; after a brief silence Mrs. Martin recurred to that of the money.

"Norah, you know that I expect my brother, Mr. Lowndes, to breakfast here to-day," she observed. "We will give the bag over to him. He is a magistrate, as you are aware, and will be the best person to advise us how to find out the real owner."

As the lady spoke, the well-known sound of her brother's double-rap at the knocker announced his arrival. Norah, light of foot, and light of heart, ran to the door to answer

the summons, and Mr. Lowndes, a tall portly man, soon made his appearance in the room.

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## VIII.

### THE CANVAS BAG.

THE magistrate, after greeting his sister, sat down, and wiped his heated brow with a large silk handkerchief. There was a look of satisfaction upon his sensible, intelligent face.

"The police have had a busy night of it," said Mr. Lowndes; "the fellow very nearly got off: but he's been arrested at last, and there's little doubt but that the charge will be brought home to him now."

"What charge—of what do you speak?" asked Mrs. Martin.

"Why of a charge against a scamp called Peter Puller," (Norah could not help starting at the name,) "who is one of a gang of unprincipled fellows who have been trying in dif-

ferent parts of the country to pass a quantity of base coin. We'd information sent down from London—a detective arrived last night, we've had a hunt—which has proved successful. It was quite time for the police to be on the alert; a great deal of mischief has been done already, for the false money is so close an imitation of the good, that the simple folks about here have taken it pretty freely. I saw a poor widow yesterday, who was in bitter distress, finding that the sovereign for which she had sold her pig was worth no more than a brass farthing."

"What heartless fraud!" exclaimed Mrs. Martin.

"This fellow—this Peter Puller, had some of the false coin on his person when he was caught," continued Mr. Lowndes, "but we have reason to think that we have not found all. Doubtless he would try to get rid of it when he discovered that the police were close on his track."

Mrs. Martin raised her hand to her forehead, as if an idea had struck her. "Norah, my maid, picked up a canvas bag this morning,"

she said, "with eight sovereigns in it; she gave it to me to take charge of till we could find to whom it belonged."

"Let's see it by all means," said Mr. Lowndes, taking his spectacles and placing them on his nose.

Mrs. Martin took the bag out of her pocket, and handed it to her brother, who shook out the bright pieces on the table, took up each, one by one, looked at it closely through his glasses, poised it on his finger to feel the weight, then flung it down to try if it would ring. After each trial he shook his head gravely; while Mrs. Martin, and Norah, who was waiting at the table, watched with interest to see the result.

"Worthless, every one of them!" cried Mr. Lowndes, first replacing the coins in their bag, and then the spectacles in their case. "It is well for your little maid there that she did not attempt to pass them, unless she could easily prove that she had nothing to do with Puller or any of the set."

Norah felt like a rider who has suddenly

reined up on the brink of a dangerous precipice, and looks down, shuddering but thankful, on the deep chasm into which he so nearly had fallen ! The idea of being even for a moment suspected of uttering base coin, of being a party to a wicked fraud, and the knowledge that she had received secret visits from the criminal's daughter, made her draw in her breath with a gasp ! What if it could have been proved that Norah had gone out on the previous night in company with Sophy Puller and her party, and had been found in the morning attempting to buy goods with false coin ! Everything would have come out at Puller's trial, and even if Norah had escaped a jail, her character would have been lost. All this shame, terror, and misery had been escaped by her simply keeping in the course of duty, and denying self to follow the Lord.

Norah was about to leave the room, when the magistrate called her back.

"Stay here a moment, my good girl," he said, laying his broad hand on the canvas bag which was on the table beside him ; "your

conduct appears to have been most praiseworthy in this affair. It is not every young servant who, having found, as she thought, eight sovereigns, would have carried them at once to her mistress. You've earned a good character, Norah, and I make no doubt that you'll keep it, and find through life that honesty is the best policy in all things." Then in a less serious tone Mr. Lowndes went on—"I'm giving a fête to-day in my grounds to all our school children here, in honor of my little girl's birthday; we're to have the grand conjuror to show his tricks, then a feast, and fireworks to close the entertainment; could you spare me this little maid?" continued the magistrate, turning towards his sister; "I should like to show the children one who has set them so good an example of honesty and uprightness."

"I will spare Norah with pleasure," said the kind old lady, "and make the same arrangement with my char-woman as I did upon Monday. Most glad am I that Norah should have this innocent amusement; I am certain

that she will enjoy it, for she will feel that she has deserved it."

Norah curtsied, blushed, and went out of the room in the quiet manner which became a young servant, then went bounding down stairs to the kitchen to make her needful preparations. Norah was full of delight; she knew that she had her lady's free forgiveness for all the past, and her confidence for the future, and but one cloud rested on the sunny sky above Norah,—the thought of the shame and trouble in which her late companion must be involved by the sad disgrace of a father.

"Ah! poor Sophy! she has had no one to show her the straight right way, no one to speak to her faithfully as my sailor-uncle spoke to me! She has not heard of the daily battle to fight, the daily cross to take up; she has not been taught that we are never, never so happy as when we heartily try, by the help of God's grace, to obey His will in all things!"

So thought Norah Peele then, and through the course of a useful, happy, and honorable life, she never found cause to change her

opinion. There is a beautiful verse in the Bible which describes in few words the future glory of those who *love the Lord* and therefore *hate evil*.\* It is this—*Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.*† The first fruits spring up even here; to the faithful and true is given the command, *rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice!*‡ But who can tell what the full harvest of light and bliss will be in the world to come, when the Redeemer shall say to His own:—*Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!*

\* Psalm xcvii. 10.

† Psalm xcvii. 11.

‡ Phil. iv. 4.



### III.

## The Sandals of Peace.

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### I.

#### DULL DAYS.

"YES, there must be something wrong," murmured Ned Franks, the maimed sailor, to himself, as he closed a book which the vicar had lent him: "'tis not like a Christian to be so restless, fidgety, and impatient as I have grown, tossed about by every little puff of wind, as if I'd no cable to hold by. 'Tis all true which is put in this book—When the Lord said, *peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you*,\* there was fuller meaning in the words than we are won't to believe. There's first the great, best blessing of *peace with God*,

\* John xiv. 27.

the knowledge that he has forgiven our sins for Christ's sake, and that we may now call Him our Father. Then there's *peace in the conscience*; no more fear of death, no more terror of judgment! Then there's *peace with our neighbor*; bitterness and strife put away, with envy, hatred, and malice. But in the Christian's peace there should be something more even than all these. There should be rest from eager impatience, rest from carking care! He should not be troubled by every trifle, worried by petty vexations. Now, what is the case with me? Why, I've been so anxious to know whether Mr. Curtis, the vicar, will choose me as teacher to his school, that I catch myself thinking about it even when I am in church! I could hardly sleep last night because I fancied that the parson did not look quite satisfied when he questioned me in the evening. Now why should I be so extremely anxious about a thing that only concerns this world? Can't I leave the matter in the hands of my God, and rest assured that He will give me whatever is really good? True,

I've many a reason to show for wishing to get the place. All my little pension goes to my sister here for my berth and food; 'tis not even my trifle of washing that Bessy will do unpaid: my jacket is almost in rags, my boots let in the water, winter is now upon us, and I'm ill provided with clothes. 'Tis hard for a one-armed man to get active occupation, though I earn a shilling now and then from the vicar or farmer Gay. The place which I hope for would put all right, and set me afloat in the world, and make me able, now and then, to take a poor neighbor in tow. Then," thus flowed on Ned's current of thought, "then I like the business of teaching; I always feel amongst the youngers as if I were scudding away with a pleasant breeze right in my sails. There's something so cheering in being with the young before the world has spoiled 'em; I've always thought that no charge would please me like that given to St. Peter, to feed the lambs. Then t'would be a rare thing for me to have regular work to do away from this cottage, where Bessy and Dan, with their

sneaking ways, often plague me out of my patience. There's many a gust of temper comes athwart us, like a puff of the north-east wind! I'd be glad to have something better to do than working in that garden, getting little thanks for my labor—or sitting in this kitchen trying to paint something that may bring me in a shilling or two. Yes," continued the young sailor, speaking half aloud, as he looked round the cottage of his sister Bessy Peele, which was neither very comfortable nor very clean, "there are reasons enough and to spare why I should wish to be made the teacher, but none why I should lose my peace of mind about the matter. I've asked God many times to give me the place if He sees that it will be for my good; I've done all that I could by reading and study to fit myself for the place, and now I've just to wait patiently, casting my cares on the Lord, believing that when we make our prayer for any earthly object like this,—

'Tis goodness still  
That grants it or denies.'

Then considering that one of the best cures for restlessness of mind is occupation, Ned spread out on the deal-table a large sheet of paper, on which he had traced out some dozen of flags, opened a little paint-box which he had bought with some casual earnings, and took down a cracked gallipot from a shelf, to be filled with water from the pump behind the cottage.

“Water enough from above!” said Ned, as he opened the back-door and looked out on the lowering sky, clad in the leaden hue of November, from which fast fell the chill heavy rain. “The drippings from the eaves will soon fill this. How dull and drear everything looks! These poor trees with but a few yellow leaves shivering and shaking here and there on the boughs, which a few weeks since were all clothed in beauty; the chill damp feeling of the air, the howling of the wind in the chimneys, don’t help to make one more blythe and gay. My little berth isn’t water-tight, and I’ve had a few shootings of rheumatic pain to show me what I may look

for during the long cold winter. I've never been the same man since the accident that cost me my left arm. I'm not so fit for roughing it as I was in these days, when fair weather or foul was all the same to Ned Franks!" The young sailor leaned against the door-post, with his eyes resting on the gallipot which the drippings were fast filling. He had lost the vigorous health and strength which had once been his; hardship and suffering had told on his powerful frame, and a feeling of irritability and depression sometimes clouded his spirits. It was the body affecting the mind, and lessening its power to struggle against anxiety and care. Such was the case on the November day on which my chapter opens.

"Why, Ned Frank, what folly is this!" said the sailor, speaking to himself as he might have done to some fretful child, when he caught himself heaving a weary sigh. "Is one who has sailed over thousands of miles of blue water, and been tossed in many a storm, to grumble like a puling girl at a little pain or a little trouble, or to care whether the sky

be blue or black, or the sea smooth or heavy ? If there's peace within, what matters the weather without ? A Christian should go on his way rejoicing, with a brave, cheerful, hopeful spirit, showing the world that trifles have no power to chafe one who has Heaven in view."

Ned Franks carried his little gallipot back to the kitchen, and was soon busily engaged in painting his sheet of flags, whistling to himself as he did so, as if to force his spirit to be cheerful. The great inconvenience of the loss of his left hand was remedied in some degree by a wooden arm terminated by a small metal hook, which the sailor used with such dexterity that a stranger might not at first sight have noticed his maimed condition.

Ned Franks was soon interrupted by the sound of some one at the front-door, which opened on the green, rapping an umbrella on the threshold to shake of the drippings, and, raising his eyes, he saw the gaunt figure of his sister Bessy Peele; the expression of whose face shewed anything but good-humor.

"This vile weather!" she exclaimed, kicking off her old boots which were coated with mud, and walking across the brick floor in her coarse blue stockings, to avoid leaving the mark of her feet all the way.

"God sends the weather, Bessy, so you and I must not grumble at it," said Ned.

"O, a' done with your cant!" cried Bessy, drawing in her lips as if in momentary pain, as she went up to the fire-place, and began raking up the glowing embers. "How are clothes to be dried, I should like to know, when rain's pelting and pouring like this? Not that I'm likely to have much either to wash or to dry," continued the woman with increasing bitterness of tone, seating herself in her old arm-chair, leaning her palms on her knees; "I've had my wet walk for my pains! the washing of the guests at the Hall is all to be given to the clerk's wife, Nancy Sands! How I hate that woman! She's as sly as a fox, and always manages to thrust herself into my place."

"She seems to have taken the wind out of



your sails this time, and I'm sorry for it," said the sailor.

"Always her way, but I'll serve her out some day, I will, sure as my name's Bessy Peele!" muttered the laundress, stooping down, and pressing her hand to her foot.

"Have you hurt yourself, Bessy?" asked Franks.

"No," answered his sister, peevishly; "but to think of those wretched Sands getting on in the world as they do!"

"He seems a quiet sort of man," observed Ned, dipping his brush into the water.

"A poor yea-and-nay sort of a body, that wouldn't say 'bo!' to a goose, and is kept in leading-strings like a baby by his managin' wife! For any one to think of him as a teacher for a school!"

"Ha!" cried Franks, almost dropping the brush, "is John Sands likely to be chosen by the vicar?"

"Well, they say so in the village," replied Bessy, still nursing her foot; "but I daresay that it's Nancy herself who has spread the re-

port. She manages everything and everybody, no doubt she'd be up to managing that."

Ned gave a little cough and went on with his painting. A few grumbling sentences from Bessy were all that broke silence from this time until Dan, her son, came in wet from the fields.

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## II.

### FLAGS OF THE WORLD.

"HEY, Uncle Ned, what are you after?" cried the boy, clattering up to the table, and peering curiously over the sailor's shoulder.

"I'm making a chart of the different flags of the world."

"To hang up over our fire-place?"

"No, to take to the town to-morrow to sell it, if I can, to get something to help to buy shoe-leather," replied Ned.

"I daresay that Mr. Danes, the stationer,

will buy it," observed Dan; "he has these sort of things in his window. What do you think you'll get for it?"

"If I could draw *all* the flags," replied Ned, "maybe the chart would be worth half-a-crown, saying that I managed to paint it neatly; but the misfortune is," continued the sailor, "that I cannot remember them all; I haven't a notion, for instance, what colors are hoisted by some of the South American States."

"O, hang the South American States!" cried Dan, "I'm sure that no one will miss 'em! You don't mean surely to put on the top of your paper, '*some* of the flags of the world,' as I see you've penciled the words! The picture won't be worth half so much if you let folks know that some of the flags are awanting."

"'Tis the fact that they are," said Ned.

"But you needn't be telling the buyers that. No one cries down his own goods. The fish-monger don't stick up a notice, 'these fish are stale,' nor the draper, 'this print warranted

not to wash.' Just put 'all the flags of the world,' and no one will be the wiser."

Ned Franks' only reply was beginning to paint the word *some* in fiery red. Dan burst into a mocking laugh, his mirth coming in explosive fits behind the hands which he had clapped before his mouth as if to smother it.

Ned, like most men, was alive to ridicule, and he felt more irritated than he chose to show. He was annoyed at the utter want of sympathy between himself and those with whom he dwelt; they could not understand him, and he did not understand them. They laughed at his scrupulous honesty and truth; he felt disgusted at their coarseness of nature and disregard of what he thought honorable and right. Ned went on painting in somewhat moody silence, aware that he had indeed greatly lessened the value of his work by publishing its incompleteness, yet not regretting that he had kept to his practice of preferring fair-dealing to profit. Ned did not choose to join in the conversation between his sister and her son, which consisted in grum-

bling against things in general, and the odious Nancy Sands in particular, guesses as to what teacher the vicar would choose, and bits of village gossip. By the time that Ned Franks had finished painting in his flags by the dim light of a flickering candle, it was the usual hour for going to rest. Ned rolled up what he called his chart, bade good-night to his sister and Dan, and going out, as usual, through the back-door, mounted in the darkness and rain the kind of steep ladder which led to his little loft above the woodhouse.

It was some time before the sailor could find the match-box which would enable him to kindle a light. He groped about in the darkness, in an impatient, irritable mood, which was by no means improved by his suddenly putting his foot into something which felt like a puddle, while a cold drip from above fell on his neck as he stooped, and made him shiver. This gave no pleasant prospect of what a light might reveal, as soon as Ned should succeed in procuring it. When he, at last, had found his match-box, and

lighted his rushlight, Ned looked above, below, and around him with anything but satisfaction. The thatch of the loft was out of repair; the rain had found its way through in more than one place. There was a little pool on the floor, and a damp spot on the mattress which served for a bed. Wet and shivering, a little lame squirrel, which was Ned Frank's pet and companion, came limping up to its master. He stooped, took up the little creature, stroked it, and warmed it within his blue jacket.

"Ah! Bushy!" exclaimed Ned Franks, "neither you nor I have found snug berths in this world. We were not made for the sort of lives we have to lead in this dog-kennel of a place!"

Ned pushed the mattress with his foot to a drier corner of the loft, and placed a basin to catch the drippings, the plashing sound of which was irritating to his temper. While taking these insufficient precautions to remedy the discomforts of his home, Ned muttered to himself in rough doggrel,—

"Irritation, vexation, and care,  
Constant fretting, worry, and wear,  
Are harder than greater trials to bear."

Having done what he could to avoid the chance of catching rheumatic fever, Ned, as was his constant habit, took up his Bible to read a few verses before lying down to sleep. He paused long in reflection over one, as if his mind could at first hardly take in its meaning. *Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always, by all means.\**

"What! even when the tide runs hard against us, when hand grows weary and heart grows faint, and those who should pull along with us are hindrances and not helps! And *by all means!* That must be, then, by our very worries and trials, the fretting and chafing that galls us! Can God give us peace in these, and by these? 'Tis hard to be understood by an impatient, hot-tempered fellow like me! Nevertheless, all that is in God's Word must be true, and St. Paul would not have asked for a blessing that God was not

\* 2 Thes. iii. 16.

ready to give. I've seen the sea bird resting on the stormy waves, and the splashing of the salt spray could not ruffle a feather of his white plumage. Mayn't it be so with the child of God on the troublous sea of life? May not that peace of God that passeth understanding make him able to ride cheerily and unharmed on the roughest water? The Lord helps us through great troubles, will He desert us in the small, and may we not please Him under every-day worries, as truly as by those acts of faith for which we have an opportunity but now and then?"

These were the questions which Ned Franks asked of his own heart, before he knelt down for his nightly prayers. Simple but earnest were the sailor's devotions; and as he afterwards laid his head on his pillow, if his thought was, "I would give anything to know whether Sands or I will be chosen as teacher," the next thought came with quiet power to lull anxiety to rest. *There be many that say, who will show us any good? Lord! lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us • I will both*



*lay me down in peace and sleep, for Thou,  
Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.\**

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### III.

#### THE PET SQUIRREL.

"BESSY, my loft is not sea-worthy; I mean 'tis as leaky as an old condemned hulk. I hope you'll speak to your landlord about it, and get him to set it to rights." Such was the sailor's greeting to his sister when they met on the following morning.

"I shall do no such thing," said Bessy, peevishly. "Very little would make Sir Lacy say that my whole cottage is an old tumble-down affair, that had better be pulled to pieces at once; he's long wanted to have it down. Lady Barton thinks it an eye-sore."

"But Sir Lacy has given his word not to pull it down now."

"The way to make him keep his word is not

\* Psalm iv. 6-8.

to be bothering him about repairs. Can't a man with hands, I mean with one hand and a hook, get a wisp of straw and patch up the roof for himself, instead of grumbling and complaining about a drop of water coming through?"

"I was never taught house-building, or house-mending either," cried the sailor, with a little impatience of manner.

"Then the sooner you learn to make yourself useful the better," was Bessy's provoking reply.

Ned was strongly tempted to retort, the taunt was so ungrateful as well as unjust, but he bit his lip and kept in the sharp reply which rose to his tongue. He was glad the next moment that he had done so, when he saw the expression of pain upon Bessy's face as she said, "just reach me the kettle, Ned; my foot's in such a state I can't so much as put it to the ground. I had scarcely a wink of sleep all night."

"I'm heartily sorry for that," cried the sailor, instantly forgetting his anger, and rising

for the kettle. "You must have run something into your foot yesterday, when you walked across the floor in your stockings."

"I do believe that I did," answered Bessy, "but I can't see anything in the foot."

"I'm going over to the town this morning, let me ask the parish doctor to come and look at the hurt."

"O no, leave me to mind my own business," exclaimed Bessy, with an intuitive dread of the surgeon's lancet. "I'll put a bit of a poultice upon it, and let the foot rest, and 'twill all be right to-morrow. But it is such a worry," she added, with fretful impatience, "and just when I've all the ironing to do."

Bessy was so peevish and irritable, that Ned was glad when breakfast was ended, and he could set off for his walk to the town, to dispose of his paper of flags. The rain had ceased, but the roads were very heavy and wet, and a chill north-east wind blew in the face of the sailor.

Ned had not walked many yards when he came in front of the cottage occupied by Sands

and his wife, a much neater and more comfortable abode than that which he himself had just quitted. Before the small garden-gate stood Jack Sands, a boy of about nine years of age, the only son of the clerk. Jack was an ungainly child, with pale fat puffy cheeks, a good deal freckled, and an impudent expression on his large pouting lips, heightened by the deformity of a projecting lower jaw. Ned did not at first notice young Sands, for his attention was attracted by the unexpected appearance of his little lame squirrel, which suddenly came limping beside him on the road.

“What, Bushy, my hearty, have you slipped the cable, and come out for a cruise?” cried Ned, at the sight of his little favorite. “I must have you back to your moorings;” and he was about to approach the pretty truant and carry it back to a place of safety, when a large sharp stone, hurled from the hand of Jack, struck the squirrel with such force that it lay quivering on the road in the agonies of death. A coarse laugh broke from the boy at the success of his aim, instantly changed to a

yell of pain, as he staggered back, reeling under the effect of a sharp box on the ear from the hand of the indignant sailor.

“Take that, you little brute!” exclaimed Ned, with anger flashing from his eyes at the act of wanton cruelty committed by the boy. Ned then strode up to the bleeding squirrel, and, with a touch gentle as a woman’s, lifted it up from the ground; but the sailor saw at the first glance that his little favorite was dying. The suffering creature did not shrink from his touch; its glazing eyes seemed to turn towards him with the confidence of affection; passive it lay for a minute in his hand, then stretched out its stiffening limbs, and breathed out its life on his bosom.

Ned felt a sharper pang of regret at the cruel fate of his pet, than one would expect could be caused to a man by the death of a squirrel. The disposition of the young sailor was affectionate and tender, and the feeble creature that he had nursed and tended, that had shared his meals, and sported at his feet, that had trusted him and loved him, had be-



**"Take that, you little brute!" exclaimed Ned, with anger flashing from his eyes at the act of wanton cruelty committed by the boy.**

**Christain's Panoply.**

**p. 148.**



come to him almost as a child. With the dead squirrel still pressed to his rough jacket, Ned strode silently and gloomily away, without casting a second glance at the author of the mischief. One of the maimed sailor's few pleasures had been suddenly destroyed, his pet had been killed before his eyes, a harmless life had been wantonly sacrificed, just to furnish a moment's amusement to an idle and thoughtless boy.

"Poor little Bushy!" sighed Ned; "cruel was the hand that threw that stone, and cut short your innocent life; and yet had not that life's enjoyment been cut short before? Never could you, a poor lame creature, lightly climb the fir trees again, spring from branch to branch, free, and happy in your freedom. You were tied down like a prisoner to a way of life for which you never were intended by nature. And is it not so with your poor maimed master? Never more shall I mount the rigging and look down from the shrouds at the waters sparkling beneath me, and feel the fresh delicious sea-breeze bearing me over the billows. I too



was never meant for the dull, joyless life which now I lead here."

The sound of his own deep sigh roused the sailor. He felt ashamed of the murmuring discontented spirit which it betrayed. Had he so soon forgotten the thoughts, the resolutions, the prayers of the previous night?

"I will bury my poor little squirrel under one of the trees that were once to him as a home," said Ned to himself, as he entered a lane bordered with dark green pines. A clear brook flowed near, and to its mossy bank the sailor carried his little favorite, and gently laid it down, intending there to dig a small hole in which to bury the squirrel. The ground was so soft from the previous rain, that Ned expected to find very little difficulty in turning up the sod. As he had no proper implement for digging, he moved the earth with the hook, which, as the reader knows, formed the hand of his wooden arm. Ned had been thus for some minutes engaged in slowly scooping out a hole, when, exerting more force than at first, he struck his hook against an imbedded

stone, and the wooden arm snapped from the shock. The painful jar which the maimed stump received annoyed the sailor less than the inconvenience and expense which the little mishap must occasion. Ned uttered an exclamation of impatience; then, taking up the broken instrument, hastily finished his work, laid little Bushy in his grave, and covered up the hole with the sod. Heaving a weary sigh, the sailor rose and quitted the spot.

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## VI.

## THE FLOATING BUOY.

“AND what may you want, my good friend?” asked the bland stationer, Mr. Danes, as, after bowing out a lady customer, he turned towards Ned Franks, who had been quietly awaiting his leisure.

Ned, with some difficulty, for he missed the help of his wooden arm, succeeded in partly

unrolling his chart. This was the first time that the sailor had attempted to sell any work of his own, and it was with diffidence that he replied, "I thought, Sir, that maybe some folks might fancy a chart like this."

"Ah! yes, some one thought the same thing before you," said the smiling stationer, turning to a portfolio which lay on his counter, and after a short search amongst its contents, drawing out a sheet covered with double the number of flags. It was a coarse colored print, bright and glaring, and twopence was marked on the margin.

Ned's paper, which he had with difficulty kept half open, rolled itself up in a moment, as he relaxed the pressure of his arm.

"Anything that I can show you?" asked Mr. Danes.

Ned Franks quietly shook his head, turned on his heel, and quitted the shop.

"I am glad at any rate that I left the word *some* on my chart," thought the sailor; "I should else have felt like an impostor, with all those red, blue and yellow crosses

and stripes staring me in the face. So I've had my trouble for my pains? I'll give this poor chart to Norah, my niece, she may prize it perhaps for my sake. I'll call at her mistress's house and see her; a sight of her sunny young face will do my heart good."

Ned was not to have this pleasure; he found Norah absent from home; so, leaving the paper and a message for his niece, he set out on his homeward way.

"I'm not in luck to-day, that's clear!" muttered Franks to himself, as he wearily retraced his steps along the road heavy with mud, while a chill November drizzle began to fall. "Everything seems to go wrong, and I feel as dull as the weather, my spirits as damp as the air. What a poor land-lubber I must have grown! How different was it with me a year or two past, when I was as light-hearted a tar as ever trod upon planks, when I cared as little for hardship or trouble as for the salt spray which dashed in my face, when the winds were whistling aloft in the shrouds! No difficulties daunted me

then; I was amongst my jolly messmates; I was serving my Queen, and the thought of returning one day to merry Old England, and seeing Bessy and her children, loomed in the distance like a harbor of hope! Ay, I was then like a trim vessel, speeding over the waves at ten knots an hour, with every stitch of canvas set, bound for some pleasant port; and now,"—the sailor slackened his pace, and his eyes were bent on the ground, as the image of his present situation rose before him,—“now I'm like some weather-beaten buoy, anchored down to mark some shoal, that can't move onwards before the breeze, that is tossed up and down by the tide, which no vessel hails, which the heaviest craft leaves behind, which knows no change, and yet no rest; that has not the active motion of a *sea*-life, nor yet the peace which we look for in port! But shame upon me,” suddenly exclaimed the tar, “for such murmuring thoughts as these! Am I not where my Master placed me? Ay, the lonely wave-rocked buoy has its use; it is not anchored

down for nothing; it has its part to perform on the billows. God's sunshine lights upon it; and, be the weather fair or foul, it floats—it never sinks! Why should my spirits sink?" continued the sailor, as he raised his clear blue eye to the lowering sky above him; "maimed arm, wearisome life, shootings of pain, messmates unkind—what are these but the little tossings which can never move the buoy from its place, nor mar its usefulness, nor prevent it from glistening in the light that comes from above? Cheer up, coward heart! never shame a Christian's profession by one doubt of God's wisdom or love! The cable of faith will hold not only against the light tossings, but the wildest, roughest storm! If God give peace, who shall give trouble? What said the prophet when tribulation swept like a hurricane o'er him? *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd*

*in the stall ; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”\**

The brave pious spirit of the sailor had burst its bonds of discontent, as Samson snapped the green withes which bound him. Still fell the chilling drizzle, still was the prospect gloomy, and Ned Franks was wending his way back to a comfortless home ; but he was no longer unhappy, the peace of God was within him. Every object on which his eye now rested seemed to take a brighter coloring from the cheerful spirit within. “Ah ! yonder over the brown fields goes the sower—a blessing be on his labor ! In the gloom and in the chill he is preparing for brighter days, when these brown fields shall be yellow with the golden crop ! Did I feel it a dull thing yesterday to look on the trees stripped of their leaves ? To-day every bare black bough preaches a lesson of hope. The time is coming when these branches will burst again into new and more glorious life ; all the world will be clad in brightness and beauty ! The gloom and chill

\* Habbakuk iii. 17, 18.

of these dark days prepare for the gladness of spring, *weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.\**

As Ned Franks walked on with quickened step, he overtook a little boy who was pursuing the same road, carrying a heavy load. •

“Ha! Stephen White, my lad, is that you?” cried the sailor, as he came up with the boy.

Stephen turned at the sound of the cheerful manly voice, and his face, which had been sad, lighted up with pleasure at sight of Ned.

“Let me lighten you of your cargo,” said the sailor, holding out his strong right hand for the burden. “We’re nigh to your home, I know, but you look tired, my boy.”

“O, Ned Franks,” cried Stephen, “will you tell me if the news are true?”

“What news do you mean?” asked the sailor.

“Is it true that Mr. Curtis is going to make John Sands our teacher, now that Mr. Jones is getting too old?”

\* Psalm xxx. 5.



"Mr. Curtis has not told me his intentions," replied Ned, speaking more cheerfully than he could have done on the subject but an hour before.

"O dear! I'm afeerd that he will!" sighed Stephen, with a disconsolate look.

"Why should you be afeerd?" asked the sailor; "as far as I know about him, John Sands is a very quiet, sober kind of man."

"That's the worst of it!" cried Stephen, in so dismal a tone that he set his companion laughing. "He always looks as if he'd just come from a funeral; and I'd rather have a teacher as would give un a rough word now and then, than a chap as would never give un a kind one, and doesn't know how to smile! I wish with all my might and main that the vicar would make *you* our teacher; the larning would be quite a pleasure, you're always so merry and jolly!"

Ned Franks was amused to hear what, in the boy's eyes, was his best qualification for the office of teacher; nor was he only amused, for the words of Stephen conveyed a lesson.

The cheerfulness which springs from a soul at peace, not only gladdens its possessor but those around him; it increases influence, it wins affection, it presents religion itself in the most attractive light.

"Stephen, my boy," said the sailor, looking down with a genial smile at his young companion, "I wish that I could never charge myself with grumbling at trifles, or being weighed down by little troubles. But you and I must try to make the best of whatever God pleases to send. Your father's a glazier, and I dare say you know well enough how the greenest trees and grass will look if seen through a bit of blue glass."

"All wintry and frosty," said Stephen.

"Then mind you, my lad, we must not be like those who fill their windows with blue glass, and look out on life as if there were nothing but troubles and trials before them. We must have clear panes that will let in the sunshine, and keep them bright by the thought how much more we have than we've ever deserved, and that the best blessings

are those which can never be taken from us."

"But if you are not made teacher!"—began Stephen.

"Then we are both bound to believe, either that the place would not suit me, or that I would not suit the place."

Thus in cheerful converse the sailor beguiled the way, till he left his young companion at the door of the glazier's shop.

"You've had a wet, weary walk, I'm afeerd," said Stephen's mother to her son.

"O, not after I was overtaken by that jolly chap, the one-armed sailor. I forgot all about the rain and the cold; it seems as if he carried the sunshine with him!"

"Ned Franks is a thorough good man," said Mrs. White; "always steady in his church-going, never seen at the public, never heard to speak a bad word. A God-fearing Christian is Ned, and one as is never ashamed of his religion."

"And 'tis a religion that makes him happy," cried Stephen, "and willing to make

others happy too! That's the kind of religion as sets one wishing to be like the man as has it!"

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## V.

## BRIARS AND THORNS.

"OUT on you, you great big blustering bully, you cruel cowardly cub; I wonder—I do—how you dare to look a mother in the face!" Such was the sudden torrent of abuse which greeted Ned Franks, as he came again in front of John Sand's cottage. The speaker was a woman, rather low in stature, but stout in person. She would have been handsome, had not the long nose shown too much disposition to meet the projecting chin, and the strongly-marked black eye-brows to join each other, especially when knitted together as at that moment, in an angry frown above a pair of flashing dark eyes! Mrs. Sands stood be-

hind her little garden-gate, her cheeks flushed with passion, her fist clenched, and her voice raised to a shrill pitch of fury.

"What's in the wind now, mistress?" asked Ned Franks, somewhat taken aback by the sudden storm of anger which he so unexpectedly had encountered.

"It's *you* who ask *me*, is it?" half shrieked out the furious woman; "you who had the heart to beat a poor child within an inch of his life!"

"Hold hard!" interrupted the sailor; "if you are talking of your son Jack, I merely gave him a box on the ear, for wantonly killing a poor harmless squirrel."

"You don't mean to say that you did not knock him down, and cuff and kick him, and injure him so, that I doubt that my poor lamb will ever hold up his head again!"

"I did not!" exclaimed the indignant sailor; "I would not kick a mortal enemy if he were down on the ground before me, much less a boy like your son. I gave him but one cuff, which did *not* make him fall, it would

hardly have harmed a four-years-old child. I am sorry that I struck him in a passion, but" ——

"O, don't you be a-going to add falsehood to brutal cruelty!" exclaimed Mrs. Sands, her fury mounting to still higher pitch.

"Falsehood!" cried Ned, starting at the insult. He made one long angry stride towards the gate, then stopped short. Was it for him to enter into a war of words with a woman, to bandy insults, to let passion master his soul? Putting a strong curb on his naturally hasty temper, Ned, looking steadily into the face of his accuser, said, "I forgive you—you are a mother!" turned, and pursued his own way, followed to the door of his sister's dwelling by shrill sounds of abuse and upbraiding. *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another,\** Ned murmured to himself, to strengthen himself by words of Scripture against the anger swelling in his soul.

Ned Franks found his sister sitting on one

\* Col. iii. 13.

chair, with her feet up on another; she was crying and wringing her hands.

"I fear you are in worse pain," said the sailor.

"Pain!" repeated the woman, swaying herself backwards and forwards, "I never felt anything like it. And then to think as if I had not enough to worry and torment me, when I could no more stand than I could fly, in comes Mrs. Lane's housemaid all in a hurry for the clothes. 'My lady's off to London this afternoon,' says she, 'we must have the things ironed directly.' 'You may iron them yourself then,' says I, in a bit of a temper, for she showed no more heart than that kettle, and I'd such a twinge in my foot at that moment. 'O, no need of that,' cries she, with a toss of her head. 'Mrs. Sands, who lives hard by, she'll make no difficulties about it!' and, would you believe it, the creature gathered up every stitch of the things I had washed, and carried them off to that woman. I do believe," added Bessy, with increased bitterness, "that Nancy will have the custom of the Lanes as

well as of the guests at the Hall. I'll be left to starve on a crust, or maybe come to the parish at last, while she feasts on the fat of the land." The thought of her rival's triumph seemed to give Bessy more pain than the swollen foot.

"Nay, Bessy," said Ned Franks hopefully, "you will do well enough if once you can get that poor foot right. Let me go back to the town, and ask the doctor to see it."

"Not to-day, no, not to-day," replied Mrs. Peele. "If it is not better to-morrow—but we'll try what a good night's rest will do. All that you can do for me now is to get things ready for dinner. Dan's taken his out to the field, and says that he won't be back till sunset. He does not care to help his poor mother."

Ned Franks instantly set about doing what he could for his sister; but as Bessy moodily watched his movements from her chair, she soon perceived the loss of his wooden help.

"Why, I say, what's become of your new arm?"



"Broken—I had a misfortune," said Ned.

"Well, you're a clumsy fellow, you are!" exclaimed Bessy, annoyed at her brother for being a less efficient help than usual, instead of feeling for him in what was indeed a misfortune. Ned took no notice of the taunt, but did his best to make, as he had said, one hand do the work of two.

Bessy grumbled all dinner-time, now at Mrs. Lane's maid, now at Nancy Sands, now at her son, now at her brother, and drew dismal pictures of what would befall the family if she did not soon recover the use of her foot.

With an effort Ned refrained not only from words, but from looks of impatience, heard complaints, and bore fretful taunts, without showing a sign of temper. "It is discipline," thought he, "I must learn to bear it with patience." Ned was glad, however, as soon as the meal was concluded, to go off to his afternoon's occupation of trying to patch up the roof of his loft. It was a relief to be beyond ear-shot of Bessy Peele. "If this complaining and finding fault is to go on day after

day," thought he, "I fear that my temper will not long stand it. The tedious trial is the greatest test; sharp and short is more readily borne."

When Ned entered his comfortless berth, sadly he missed his little Bushy, the playful solace of his lonely hours. The loss of his wooden arm, too, was now an especial inconvenience; the sailor, as he worked, missed its help at every turn.

"I must ask for a patient spirit and an even temper," said Ned to himself, as he felt the danger of a return of that depression which seemed to him almost a sin. "I must take warning from what has befallen poor Bessy, for I can trace a kind of likeness between her trouble and that infirmity of my own which makes me so easily worried by trifles. I must not walk *unshod*; I must not neglect *the preparation of the Gospel of Peace*. If I have that spirit which becomes a Christian, I shall not start and wince at each sharp pebble that lies in my path, and the remembrance of a wrong will not lie festering and rankling in me,

unfitting me for work, destroying my comfort, my usefulness, and my peace, like the needle, or whatever it be, that is causing such pain to my sister."

Ned Franks had one more bitter drop in his cup before the day came to a close. Dan, his nephew, returned home at dusk, and before he opened his lips to speak, the sailor judged from the eager twinkle in the sharp black eyes of the boy, that he was the bearer of news; whether good or bad it was not so easy to guess, for Dan would relish being the messenger of the latter quite as much, if not more, than of the former, if the evil did not affect his own welfare.

"O Uncle Ned," cried the boy, "how came you to whack Jack Sands like that?"

"I did nothing but give him a box on the ear," said Franks.

"It must have been a precious hard un," laughed Dan; "there's every one talking about it; and as for Nancy Sands, she's as savage as a Bengal tiger."

"I know that she's savage," said Ned

Franks, with a peculiar smile, as he recalled their last encounter ; "but the boy could have been but very little hurt."

"What, when you smashed your wooden arm across his head !"

Ned Franks raised his eyebrows in surprise at the new form which the accusation against him had taken.

"You can hardly deny that, uncle," continued Dan, "for there's the broken stump to witness against you."

Ned scarcely knew whether to be angry or to laugh ; he was provoked at the evident pleasure which the boy took in giving him pain, and began to be uncomfortably conscious that the one blow which he had hastily given might be exaggerated into a serious attack. Nancy Sands had doubtless her own reasons for making the worst of any act of indiscretion committed by the candidate for an office to which her husband aspired.

"Here are a few more briars in my path," thought the sailor ; "but a Christian should be able quietly and resolutely to tread all

such under foot, and go on his way undisturbed and unharmed."

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## VI.

### R E B U K E .

BESSY PEELE found her foot so much worse on the following morning, that she thankfully accepted her brother's offer to go for the doctor. Two nights spent in sleeplessness and pain had overcome the poor woman's dread of the sharp measures which might be thought needful by a surgeon, since various simple village remedies had been tried, and tried in vain.

Ned Franks set off early. He had, as the reader is aware, to pass the cottage of Nancy Sands, and it must be owned that he was not sorry to see that its door was closed, and that the Bengal tiger seemed to be quiet within her den.

A few paces further on, Ned overtook Mr. Curtis, the vicar of Colme, who was walking at a slow pace, with his eyes fixed on the ground, and a slight frown of annoyance on his usually placid benevolent face.

"Is that you, Ned Franks?" he said, raising his eyes as the sailor touched his hat, and bending them on the young man with an expression grave almost to severity. "I am sorry, very sorry, and much disappointed at hearing what has occurred."

"May I be bold to ask, sir, what you have heard?" said Franks, anxious to know the worst.

"You whom I had regarded as one of the most earnest Christians in my parish, you whom I had thought to place in a post of trust, you gave way yesterday, I fear, to a burst of ungovernable temper. You struck a young boy, knocked him down, and kicked him as he lay at your feet!"

Franks could hardly listen in silence to the end, so impatient was he to clear himself

before one whose good opinion he valued beyond that of any other man.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he answered, in that tone and with that look which always conveyed an impression of candor and truth, "some one has shamefully misinformed you! The simple facts are these. The boy, Jack Sands, flung a stone at my lame squirrel, and killed my poor favorite before my eyes; I struck him once—no more—with my hand, he did not fall, nor did I touch, nor so much as look at him again!"

"I cannot doubt your word, Franks," said the clergyman, resuming his own mild manner, as he met the clear gaze of those truthful eyes; "but though you may only have struck the boy *once*, I fear that your blow fell with greater force than you may have intended, and that you have inflicted an injury which I feel assured that you are one to regret. Young Sands has not left his bed since; I have just seen him in the cottage of his parents; he is certainly feverish and ill, with throbbing pulse and a burning brow.

I am going to send for the doctor from the town."

Ned Franks flushed up to his temples. "I am on my way thither, sir," said he. "I will ask the doctor to visit the boy as well as my sister. I am grieved, more grieved than I can say, that the sudden gust of anger upset me, and made me lay a finger on the child; though," Ned could not refrain from adding half aloud, "he's the first boy as ever I met with that couldn't stand a box on the ear."

"I trust, my friend," said the vicar, with all his wonted kindliness of tone, "that this event will serve as a valuable lesson to you for the future. You bear a high character in the village for honesty, truthfulness, and kindness of heart; there are few whom I would more gladly serve, none whom I would more readily trust; I believe you to be not only in name, but in deed and truth, a Christian." Ned felt more abashed at the praise of his vicar than he had done at the blame. "But you have to remember," continued Mr. Curtis, "that he who would be a follower of the Lamb, must not



only be faithful and just, but must adorn the Gospel in all things, by patience, by self-command, and by the gentleness which becomes the servant of Him who hath said, *learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly.*" \*

Ned Franks only bent his head in answer to the exhortation of the vicar ; his heart seemed to rise into his throat, and it would have been impossible to him to have uttered a word at that moment. He went on his way with a troubled spirit, with a conscience not free from self-reproach, and yet a consciousness that his conduct had not been so faulty as it appeared in the sight of the world.

" Here have I been for months, years, trying to keep watch against this hasty temper of mine, and the moment I'm caught off my guard, the first cuff I give to a lubberly boy has as much effect as if I'd been using a marlin-spike 'gainst an enemy trying to board ! It must have happened, as the parson said, for a lesson. When a man hoists the Christian flag, his temper, his words, as well as his acts,

\* Matt. xi. 29.

must all be brought under discipline and control. I must strive harder than I ever yet have done to bring my unruly spirit into subjection. I know that I'm hasty with my tongue, though this is the first time for years that I've shown myself quick with my hand to avenge a wrong. The match will sometimes be put to the powder, and there's the flash, the report, and the mischief done, before I've time to remember one of my good resolutions. What's to be done?" mused the troubled seaman; "here's my comfort gone, to say nothing of another's, my character for good temper lost, and with it, I fear, all hopes of having the situation of teacher, just because I acted from impulse, and didn't give myself a moment for thought. What if I were resolutely to determine never to answer a taunt or notice an insult, or act or speak when stirred to anger, till I have silently repeated to myself a single verse from the Bible? That would give me time to haul in sail, before the sudden squall capsized me! Yes, with God's help, this will I do; I will repeat over to myself the fruits

of the Spirit, to remind me what a Christian's spirit should be—*Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*;\* before I come to the end of that blessed list, the stormy passion will have blown over.”

As Ned Franks, with the steadfastness of purpose which was a part of his nature, was forming this resolution, his meditations were interrupted by a loud jovial voice from a carpenter's shop which looked out on the road along which he was passing.

“Hey, Ned Franks, my good fellow, are you going this morning to the town?”

“Ay, ay,” answered the seaman to the inquirer, who was a portly, jovial, elderly man, who, even when employed, as he was at that time, in making a coffin, never lost his habitual expression of easy good-humor.

“Then you'll not mind calling at the chemist's, and bringing in the physic for my wife,” said Ben Stone, pointing with his thumb across

\* Gal. v. 22, 23.

his shoulder towards the inner room which opened into the shop.

"I will with pleasure," answered the sailor:  
"how is your wife this morning?"

"O! she'll do bravely," said the jovial old man, who was as much disposed to look on the bright side of all things, as Bessy Peele was to look on the dark side. Ben Stone used to make it his boast that no trouble that he had met with in life had ever cost him an hour's rest, or damped his appetite for a meal. His easy temper was not the result of Christian principle; he did not wince, for he felt no pain; his heart was cased in insensibility resembling the toughness of skin possessed by some of the animal creation.

"Why, what's become of your arm?" exclaimed Ben Stone, who, having made the wooden appendage, quickly noticed the loss of it.

"I broke it yesterday," replied Ned.

"Over some one's pate, eh?" asked the carpenter, with a merry twinkle in his eye.

"No, over a stone," answered the sailor.

"Have you kept the bit o' wood with the hook?"

"Yes, I have it at home."

"Then I'll send my lad Bill Jones for it, and get it ready to fasten on again by the time you come back from the town."

"I should be heartily glad, only, just now I've no shot in my locker," said the sailor.

"O! we'll say nothing about cash atween friends," cried the jovial carpenter; "you do my errand for me, I splice your arm for you, one good turn deserves another."

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## VII.

### TONGUE AND TEMPER.

LESS than two hours after Ned Franks had passed the carpenter's house, as Ben Stone was carefully cutting and shaping the thick bit of wood which was honored by the name of an arm, though it looked more like the handle

of a stout umbrella, Mrs. Sands entered his shop.

"Good day, Mr. Stone," said she, with a soft voice and pleasant demeanor, which, as the carpenter used to observe, was the velvet over the claws of the cat; "I wish you'd be so good as to step up directly, and put things to rights with my mangle."

"Presently," answered Ben Stone; "I must do my surgeon's work first, and put things to rights with Franks' arm."

"Ned Franks' arm!" exclaimed the woman so shrilly, that the carpenter pointed with his thumb towards the inner-door, as if to remind her that beyond it lay his invalid wife; but Nancy was disposed to take no hint; at the sound of the sailor's name, the cat had put out her claws.

"Ned Franks!" she repeated in a yet louder tone, "why, he broke that very arm in beating my poor boy," and she clenched her hand with a passionate gesture.

"Not he—Ned told me 'twas over a stone."

"And you would take his word in the matter!" exclaimed the irritated mother.

"I'd take his word in any matter," said the carpenter, with unchanging good-humor; "Franks always keeps so close to the truth, that I'd believe him if he told me that he'd broken this here arm in fishing a whale out of Bessy Peele's washing-tub!" and the carpenter chuckled at his own joke, quite unconcerned as to how Mrs. Sands might take it.

"You're his friend!" said the woman sharply.

"Not his more than any other man's; but I say 'fair play's a jewel,' and 'give every one his due,'" was the cool reply of the carpenter, as he scraped the wood in his hand.

"Ned Franks has a violent temper!" cried Nancy, who knew that she could not attack the sailor's character on the point of truth.

"I don't think that he has," said Ben Stone, quietly intent on his work.

"All the world knows it!" exclaimed Mrs. Sands.

Ben Stone shrugged his shoulders, and uttered his peculiar chuckle. "My wife," he

pointed over his shoulder, "my wife often says that Ned Franks must have the temper of a saint to get on with his sister, Bessy Peele."

"He has the temper of a wolf!" exclaimed Nancy.

"Well, mistress, there's no use in our bandying words about the matter," said the stout carpenter, with perfect good-humor; "'tis easy to put it to the proof. I see Franks himself walking along the high road, he'll come straight here for his arm. You try his temper to your heart's content, there's no one more up to that work than yourself; if you get the sailor to burst out into a passion, to speak one bad word, or to bolt out of the shop in a huff, I'll mend your mangle for nothing! There's a fair offer now, will you take it?"

"To be sure I will!" cried Mrs. Sands; "and I'll stir up the fire so briskly, as soon to set the kettle a-boiling over!"

The carpenter chuckled again at the thought of the coming encounter, rose, and opened the door which led to his wife's room, leaving it



slightly ajar, as though to let his sick partner share in what was sport to him, little as it might prove so to the badgered sailor.

The next minute Ned Franks entered the shop with a phial in his hand, which he laid down on the carpenter's lathe, facing, as he did so, Nancy Sands, who stood with her arms akimbo, insolent defiance depicted on her features.

Instead of being embarrassed at thus unexpectedly meeting his enemy, as perhaps both Ben Stone and the woman expected, Ned instantly addressed Mrs. Sands with a frankness which might have disarmed a less implacable foe.

"I have been to the doctor, Mrs. Sands; he will go to your son directly, on his way to my sister's cottage. I'm sorry to hear that Jack is ill; and more sorry still if my hasty blow had anything to do with his illness."

"If," repeated Nancy, with a provoking emphasis on the word; "of course *you* don't think that it had, of course *you* believe that

helpless innocent children were made to be cuffed, and kicked, and bullied, and battered"—the woman's voice rose higher and higher with each word; she was working herself into a violent passion, and Ben Stone turned to see what effect her attack would have on the sailor, with the same amused interest with which he might have watched a fight between two quarrelsome schoolboys.

To the carpenter's surprise Ned Franks made no reply; his lips were slightly moving, as if he were repeating something to himself, but not a sound came from them. Baffled in her first charge, Nancy Sands quickly renewed the attack.

"And you're a fit person you are to set up for a teacher of others. You pretend to a deal of learning, I daresay, though I never heard that you could so much as count your ten fingers—five fingers and a hook, I should say, seeing you lost your arm from tumbling down into a cellar, after making, I've not a doubt, a bit too free with the liquor that was in it."

Ben Stone could not refrain from muttering "that's too bad;" but still Ned Franks, though flushed, and with quivering lips, made no reply to the insolent taunt. He merely turned towards the carpenter, drew up his empty sleeve and glanced at the wooden arm, as if to request him without delay to finish the necessary business. Perhaps the sailor, struggling to master his rising passion, could not trust himself then to speak.

"You'd have a fine way of teaching, you would," pursued the implacable Nancy, "you'd give lesson with the rope's-end and cat-o'-nine-tails; you'd"—she stopped suddenly short, looking startled and aghast, as the door, which had been ajar, opened wider, and the well-known form of Mrs. Curtis, the vicar's wife, emerged from Mrs. Stone's room. Ben Stone rubbed his broad hands, and chuckled with glee at seeing Nancy's confusion on finding what an unexpected auditor she had had in the lady who had visited his dwelling to read to his invalid wife. It was not without design

that the jovial carpenter had set that inner door ajar.

Mrs. Curtis did not choose to take apparent notice of the strange conversation which she had unintentionally heard, and intentionally interrupted; perhaps she pitied the confusion of the startled woman. "Mrs. Sands," said the gentle lady, "there is the doctor's gig passing by; he is doubtless on his way to visit your son, let us go and hear his report."

Nancy was probably glad of the opportunity of making her escape from the carpenter's shop. With a sudden change from violence to submission, she followed the vicar's wife, who, in passing Ned Franks, gave him a smile so bright and expressive, that it repaid him for his painful but successful effort to *follow peace*, for conscience' sake, under bitter provocation.

Mrs. Curtis and Nancy had hardly quitted the place, when Ben Stone burst into an uproarious laugh. "It's been the best fun—the rarest fun as ever I had in my life. I wouldn't for ten pounds have missed it, just to see that

woman's face, ha! ha! ha! when the lady came in so unexpected. She'll not be talking of other folks' tempers, I take it; she little guessed who was in that back room."

Ben Stone was 'so much more inclined to laugh and talk than to work, that the fastening on of the wooden arm was a very tedious affair, and the patience of Ned was again tried, though in a way far less provoking. Franks was anxious to go and hear the result of the doctor's visits both to young Sands and his sister; but the jovial carpenter held him prisoner, nor released him till the gig had again been driven past on its way back to the town.

At length the wearisome fastening, fixing, and screwing were accomplished, and the sailor, after thanking the friendly carpenter, hurried off to the house of his sister. He found Bessy seated in the kitchen, with her bandaged foot resting on a chair, but her wrinkled brow looking more serene than it had done since she had injured her foot.

"'Tis out!" she cried, in a tone of rejoicing.

"What is out?" inquired her brother.

"The bit of a broken needle that's been a-torturing me all this while. I wish I'd sent for the doctor afore. But he says that now in a day or two the foot will be as sound as ever."

"That's good news indeed!" said Ned Franks, seating himself by his sister, and reflecting back her smile on his kindly face. "And did the doctor tell you anything about how he found young Sands?"

"Yes, to be sure," replied Bessy; "the boy's a-sickening for the measles—that was what laid him up, though 'twas put upon the blow. I shall have Mrs. Lane's washing, and that from the Hall too," continued Mrs. Peele, with great satisfaction, "for the ladies for weeks and months to come will be frightened out of their wits at the notion of carrying infection home in the clothes!"

"Poor little Jack!" cried the sailor; "if I'd know hen was sickening for measles, I'd never have laid a finger upon him! 'Tis the

last time, I trust, that I ever shall give way to passion like that!"

As the sailor ended the sentence, a light tap at the door was heard, and Mr. Curtis, the vicar, entered the cottage, accompanied by his wife.

"Don't rise, Mrs. Peele, pray don't rise," said the clergyman, motioning with his hand to the lame woman to keep her seat; I have come here to see your brother, Ned Franks, on a small piece of business." That the business was of a pleasant nature might be seen at once in the beaming face of the lady.

"You are aware," pursued the vicar, addressing himself to the sailor, "that I have for some time been looking out for a teacher for our school. Your character, as well as your fair acquirements in knowledge, have made me think of you for the office. There was but one thing which made me, I own, hesitate in my decision; that was a doubt regarding your command over your temper—a doubt painfully strengthened by what I heard of the affair between you and young

Sands. I need not tell you, you are doubtless aware, that the doctor's report of the nature of the boy's sickness has quite removed the impression that it was occasioned by violence on your part. There is another circumstance in your favor. My wife accidentally to-day became a witness of your Christian patience and forbearance under provocation such as could have been borne but by few. It is, therefore, with perfect satisfaction of mind that I offer you now the place which is at my disposal. The duties are not heavy; the salary, though not large, is sufficient to make you comfortable; three well-furnished rooms will be at your service; and if you accept the office, I feel assured that not only by your teaching, but by your example, you will impress on the boys the value of *the wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits.*"\*

The eyes of the sailor sparkled with de-

\* James iii. 17.

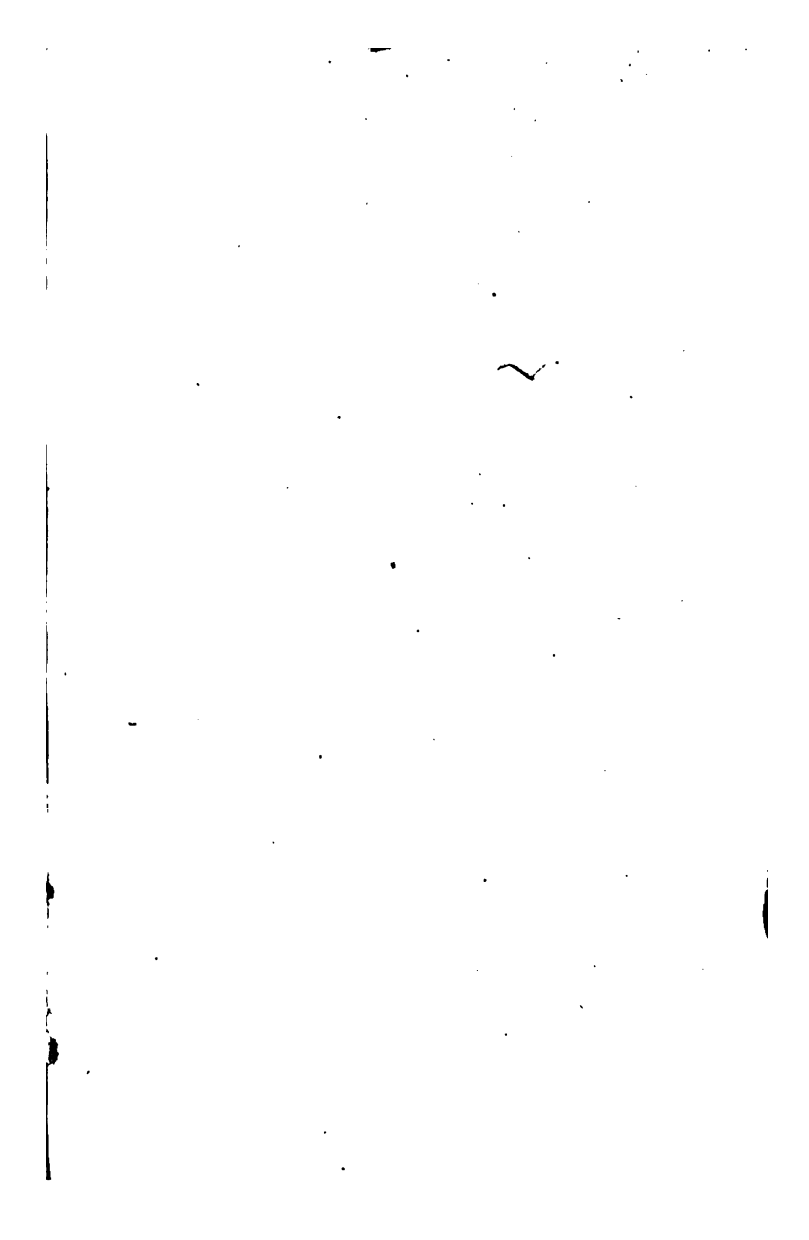


light, though his uttered words were but few. His soul was breathing forth one song of thanksgiving. *I will praise Thee, O Lord! with my whole heart; I will be glad and rejoice in Thee.\** A gleam of wintry sunshine poured at that moment into the cottage, gilding the humble dwelling with a brightness like that of spring.

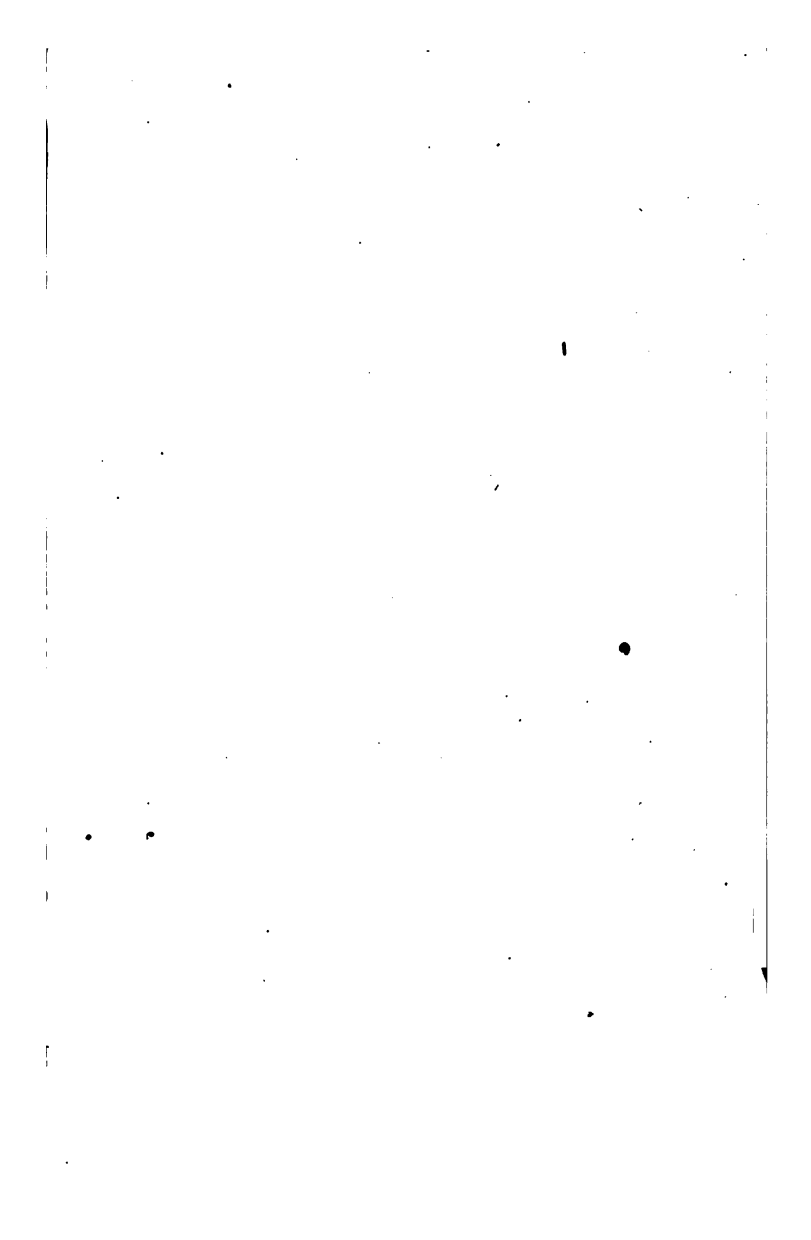
“How lovingly has the Good Shepherd dealt with me!” thought Ned Franks, as he ascended the rough steep ladder which led to his damp, miserable loft, to make preparations for his removal. “*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters.†* And the Lord hath done more than this: He hath shown me that, even if the green pastures must be quitted for the lonely wilderness way, it may be trodden firmly, fearlessly, hopefully, if God grant us the help of his Spirit, if the foot of the Christian be *shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace.*”

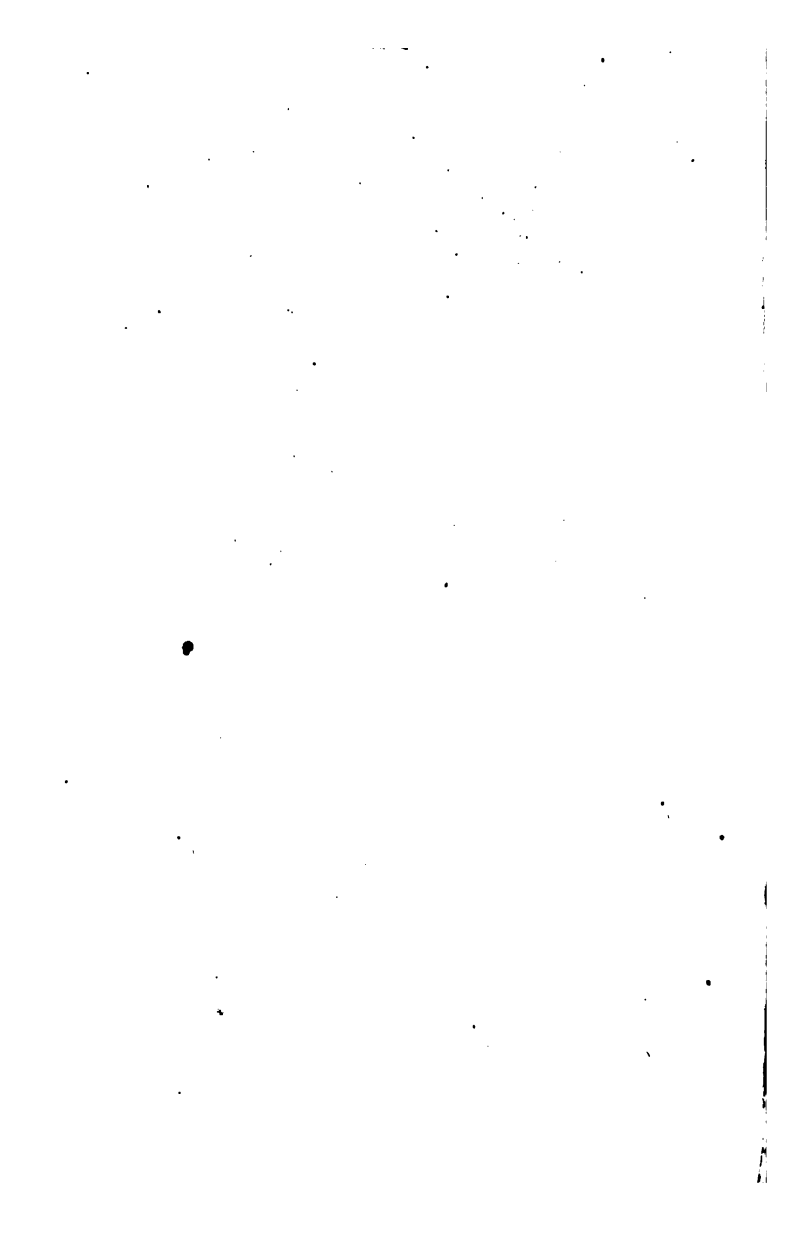
\* Psalm ix. 1, 2.

† Psalm xxiii. 2.











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